

## DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

### Community in dance

### somatic learning at the interface of contemporary dance and the Faldenkrais Method®

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# **Community in Dance: Somatic Learning at the Interface of Contemporary Dance and the Feldenkrais Method®**

**By**

**Jenny Coogan**

**May 2021**



***A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy***



## Certificate of Ethical Approval

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Applicant:	Jenny Coogan
Project Title:	Case Studies that integrate the somatic principles of the Feldenkrais Method into the dance practice of two different communities of learning

This is to certify that the above named applicant has completed the Coventry University Ethical Approval process and their project has been confirmed and approved as Medium Risk

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## ABSTRACT

Contemporary dance practice and performance for older amateur adults remains underrepresented in the German cultural landscape. This thesis explores the aesthetic and socio-cultural efficacies of an improvisational *Ausdruckstanz* (expressionist dance) practice and performance facilitated through the strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® with the ensemble *ArtRose*, a community of non-trained dancers aged 60+. Drawing from social somatic theories and philosophical premises of dialogue viewed through a phenomenological lens, this thesis probes the conditions that serve as a conduit for constructing subjectivity, personal and collective agency and affect in a manner that is democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing. Its two-fold methodological imperative combines Participant Action Research and practice-as-research as both include the full participation of the researcher in the field and are based in distributive and collaborative creation and critical, self-reflective enquiry. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires with participants, researcher notes and videos of practice and performance. The ultimate verification of the research is revealed in the collaboratively created dance *Mut und Gnade* (Courage and Grace) that served as the practical submission of this thesis.

This practice-as-research offers an original contribution to the developing consciousness and emerging presence of performative dance art with elders in the German cultural landscape and explores conditions that might lead to its recognition, valuation, and acceptance in this context. The findings of this thesis reconceptualize the genre of Community Dance or 'dance in the community' by offering a first reading of a 'community in dance'. A community in dance is one of interminable development, forming and (re)forming due to the engagement of its members to create an environment of distributed authority and responsibility in which all contribute both to the continuity of the ensemble and its singular artistic expression. This thesis unfolds a specific example of a 'community in dance', the *ArtRose* ensemble. Thesis investigations address both the microcosm of the *ArtRose* community and its resonance in the macrocosm of the greater sociocultural and political environment in which it is embedded.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction

Dance is inherently a socially organized phenomenon of shared and experiential learning that speaks both to and of the communities in which it is created (Thomas 2003: 21, Hanna 2015, Turner 2008, Robertson and Kupperts 2007). A review of the literature reveals that both dance and choreography are simultaneously places for the creation of knowledge and places of research (Kershaw 2016, Spatz 2015, Batson and Wilson 2014, Noë 2007, Parviainen 2002, Fraleigh and Hanstein 1998, Martin 1998, Lather 1994, Sheets-Johnstone 1984). The research of this doctoral thesis offers an example of practice-as-research in which the creative artefact constitutes a part of the doctoral submission. The research setting is with the *ArtRose*<sup>1</sup> ensemble, a group of non-trained 60+ dancers. Thesis relevant research with this ensemble began in 2013 and investigates both individual and shared conceptions and understandings of somatically informed improvisational dance making and performance and the efficacies for the sustainability of a 'community in dance'. The recording shows the process that the dance company has engaged in when making their work and the reader is invited to look at the recording of the performance in conjunction with reading the written text.

The practice and performance of this ensemble relies on sense, sensation, perception, and action based in intuitive, somatic, and tacit knowledge and works from a register of scored improvisational dance. The Feldenkrais Method® of somatic learning through movement, named after its founder, Moshé Feldenkrais (1904-1984), offers the pedagogical and artistic scaffolding for the transmission of the practice and creative strategies for the dance making. Social philosopher John Dewey's (1859-1952) appeal

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the ensemble is a play on words. In the German language the word for arthritis is *Arthrose*. Elimination of the letter H in the middle of the word translates the meaning of the word from one that implies disease and into one that conjures aesthetic appeal and growth.

for community-based proceduralism and naturalistic enquiry of learning in a democratic and reflective environment (1917/2008) coupled with sociologist Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) call for communicative action (1958) and educationalist Étienne Wenger's (1952-) and social anthropologist Jean Lave's (1939-) organizational construct of communities of practice (1998) guide its socio-political deliberations and support the ensemble's sustainability. Philosopher Martin Buber's (1878-1965) dialectic between being and doing, endow this thesis with its ethical and spiritual consciousness. The somatic, socio-political, and philosophical underpinnings of this thesis join in the practice and performance of the *ArtRose* 'community in dance'.

Consequently, the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this research align with the experiential elements of being and acknowledges the sociocultural aspects of subjective experiences that construct identities (von Glasersfeld 1995, Gergen 1994, Glaser, 1992). Its conceptual framework harvests from Somatics, The Feldenkrais Method®, a philosophy of dialogue, experiential education, and theories of community building. These enquiries have evolved out of constructivist and post-positivist paradigms that view the world as mutable social constructions (Schwandt 1994), posit the existence of multiple realities in personal meaning-making (Robson 2011), and consider the *Leib* to be a non-permanent body-self, which is formed and transformed through the context of one's own lived experiences (Schusterman 2008, Johnson 1997, Feldenkrais 1972). Socio-constructivism emphasizes the collective generation and transmission of meanings between people as they form their relationships with the world (von Glasersfeld 1995, Long 2002, LaMothe 2014).

The methodological imperatives of this thesis are two-fold: Participant Action Research and practice-as-research<sup>2</sup> as both are vital for the procedural and artistic outputs of this research as the one underlies reciprocal and collaborative exchange in the research environment, and the other, the creation of a performative work that embodies and expresses the nature of the research.

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<sup>2</sup> Most commonly practice-as-research appears in publications in the lower case, and Participant Action Research in the upper case. The manner of referral for these two practice-led methodologies adheres to this tendency.

Participant Action Research methodology affirms the human values of reciprocity and collaboration in the research setting (McNiff and Whitehead 2006, Lewin 1946) and is understood as a method for distributive collaborative creation that aims to improve the rationality, justice and understanding of one's own practice in the situations in which the practices are carried out (Carr and Kemmis 1986: 162). Grounded in experiential learning and social theories of collective enquiry and experimentation, Participant Action Research is ethnographic in nature. Its features prioritize individual feelings, viewpoints, and patterns that surface in the shared dance practice that may affirm individual values in the research undertaking. This means that participant responses are interpreted within theoretical paradigms of social organization and culture (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 1).

Practice-as-research is a critical, self-reflective enquiry undertaken in social situations in which the researcher participates in the practice of the performing art (Melrose 2018, Pakes 2009, Wisker 2008). All members of the ensemble, including myself, participate in dance practice, creation and performance, a fact that demonstrates the necessity for a practice-as-research methodology. Practice-as-research methodology recognizes that the recording and submission of a creative artefact validates constitutes enquiry process itself. A substantial part of my research for this doctoral thesis included the submission of the dance artefact, *Mut und Gnade* (Courage and Grace) in which I performed and is therefore an example of practice-as-research methodology. The artistic and social outcomes of our practice are driven by the manner in which we are being – dancing – and communicating together. To date, *ArtRose* has collectively created and performed seven scored improvisational dance works. The 2018 work, *Mut und Gnade* (Courage and Grace), for sixteen dancers and one musician, constituted the practical submission of this thesis. This dance premiered and was examined at the *Labortheater* in Dresden, Germany on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2018<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Video and photo documentation of this production is included in Appendix 2.

The two-fold methodological framework, embedded in qualitative research methods, supports this thesis with a basis for the investigation and understanding of relational, somatically informed improvisational dance and community building in the *ArtRose* ensemble.

The manner of relational dance coupled with the sharing of artistic and organizational responsibilities in the creative processes of the ensemble endow the *ArtRose* community with its continuity and stability. This is one that operates through distributed authority and shared responsibility and grows and transforms over extended periods of time through the way we share the dance together.

The setting of this research is in the city of Dresden, the capital of the former East German state of Saxony. The ensemble meets once weekly for a two-hour dance practice in studio spaces at the Palucca University of Dance, where I serve as a full-time faculty member teaching in the bachelor and master's programmes in dance performance and pedagogy. Membership is free of charge<sup>4</sup> and open to all who wish to practice dance together in a somatic and improvisational manner and who are willing to assume both personal and collective responsibility for the continual forming, (re)forming and (trans)forming of the ensemble. Full participation in both practice and performance is essential and required of all members, as the bodily felt experiences of our dance practice generate and verify individual knowledge and intuition that can often result in a communally felt essence or essences of the experience (Patton 1990: 70). The fact that all members of the ensemble participate in dance practice, creation and performance demonstrates the necessity for a practice-as-research methodology. The artistic and social outcomes of our practice are driven by the manner in which we are being – dancing – and communicating together. To date, *ArtRose* has collectively created and performed seven scored improvisational dance works. The 2018 work, *Mut und Gnade* (Courage and Grace), for sixteen dancers and one musician,

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<sup>4</sup> As a faculty member at the Palucca University, I have the privilege to use studio spaces when available. To date, studio space has always been available for the weekly *ArtRose* practice. As there is no cost for the rental of studio space, and I accept no fee for my facilitation of the practice, and there are no costs for the participants.

constituted the practical submission of this thesis. This dance premiered and was examined at the *Labortheater* in Dresden, Germany on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November, 2018<sup>5</sup>.

Working with the corporeality of *ArtRose*, this thesis investigates how a construct of somatically informed dance practice and transmission can serve as a conduit for constructing subjectivity, personal and collective agency and affect with the members of this ensemble in a manner that is democratic, equitable, liberating and life enhancing (Stringer 1996). The practice of *ArtRose* is one that respects and supports diversity of thought, knowledge, culture, personal identity, and transformative experience. As researcher and participant, I aim to steer our practice so that it is predicated neither on the imposition of the explicit control of a single practitioner nor of the singular artistic signature of the researcher. Research questions focus on the interrelation between individual and collective agency and affect and social responsibility in the facilitation of individual artistic growth and the sustainability of the ensemble and address the recognition, valuation, and acceptance of dance art performance practices with older non-trained dancers in Germany's cultural landscape. This points to the potential consideration for a dismantling of existing presuppositions that concert dance in Germany is reserved for professional performing dancers and for audiences expecting to witness a high level of physical and technical expertise. The performative practice of *ArtRose* thereby challenges existing cultural conventions and spectatorship expectations. I recognize that these reflections are not new and were underlying paradigms guiding the advent of the *Laientanz* (amateur dance) movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Germany, as well as the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century advent of Community Dance in Britain and postmodern practices in the United States. During the forty years of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), apart from Folklore dance, precedence did not exist for either the leisure practice or performance of professionally choreographed dance works for non-professional dancers in either conventional or nonconventional theatres and settings<sup>6</sup> (Jeschke and Vettermann

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<sup>5</sup> Video and photo documentation of this production is included in Appendix 2.

<sup>6</sup> The forms of dance practiced by the GDR citizens were Folklore dance (primarily in state associations for skilled amateurs), Ballroom dance and dance in clubs to the music of live bands. This construct of club dancing transformed into discotheques in the late 1970s. Formations and clubs were regulated and monitored by the state; privately owned and run schools of dance did not exist.

2000). Despite the many years since the German reunification in 1989/90 and new inroads in more inclusive dance practices in the German cultural landscape, the visibility of amateur dance art ensembles for older adults is in its formative stages in the former East German states. Such ensembles remain underrepresented and inadequately supported and acknowledged in the greater community. Therefore, the research and presentation of this thesis offer an original and timely contribution to the emerging body of dance research in this field in Germany.

My roles are those of a fully participating member of the ensemble and a researcher. My position as researcher underscores both the critical reflection, conducted through conversation and semi-structured interviews with the members of the ensemble and video recordings and researcher notes, necessary for the analysis and evaluation of the physical as well as the ethical implications of the group's processes<sup>7</sup>. Reflection proceeds with the aim to effectively facilitate and understand the ensemble's methods of distributed collaboration that can assist the authentication of the enquiry's premises. Immersion in the practice provides me with both the context for how I flesh out my investigations as a researcher and allows me to co-create the essences of our shared practice, so as to fully experience, reflect and analyse the nature of the physical, socio-cultural, and political ramifications of the *ArtRose* ensemble. Therefore, this practice-as-research is, in part, interpreted through the bias of an autoethnographic lens. As such, I deem it essential to bring a form of presentation and reflection of my own narrative in dance into this work.

## 1.2 Personal Position

'We all are situated beings with a history of our own and that knowledge in the postmodern perspective is related to the local and particularized practices through which we construct our practices, understandings, and conceptions' (Ihde 2002: 67-

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<sup>7</sup> Researcher notes and transcripts of interviews can be found in the Appendix 5.

68). I know that my research is guided by my own cultural, moral, and aesthetic compass, formed by gender, experience, class, privilege, ethnicity, and one's unique embodied way of being in the world (Green 2015: 13). I know that what I convey in my own practice and facilitation of dance and dance making and performance is that which has meaning for me. This echoes the axiom of dance scholar Erika Fischer-Lichte that states: We teach not only that what we know, but also, we teach that who we are (2009).

The physicality, spirituality, anxiety, and satisfaction I have experienced in dance have been to greater and lesser degrees integral to my life since childhood. Part of this journey included a BFA Degree from the bastion of American Modern Dance, the Juilliard School in New York City. The Juilliard program was in many ways somatically informed without being defined as such and provided me with my first somatic experiences in kinaesthetic imagining and deep body sensing. The Humphrey-Limon based technique classes of Betty Jones integrated the principles of Lulu Sweigard's Ideokinesis (Lewis 1983). We young dancers sensed and moved with the oscillations of posture at the beginning of each of her classes. German expressionist dance artist Hanya Holm (1893-1992) offered us eager students the space to engage phenomenologically with movement in hours of explorations in turning or undulation. In addition, I learned and performed seminal works from the American lineages of modern dance and became fully trained in both the Ballet and Modern Dance idioms. My embodied experiences at Juilliard, coupled with forty years of professional immersion in the practices of modern, postmodern, and contemporary dance, *Ausdruckstanz* and *Tanztheater* in the United States, Europe, and Germany both East and West, extensive experience in a variety of somatic practices and decades filled with choreographing, teaching, performing, directing two dance ensembles, and most recently scholarship, resonate in my being, shape my lifeworld, and colour my dance practice. Consequently, this thesis is in part framed through my own personal experience. The four-year professional training programme in the Feldenkrais Method® that I completed in 2001 has most significantly influenced the way I live in the world. Therefore, the centre of this thesis revolves around the epistemological and



ontological premises of the Feldenkrais Method® that locate knowledge in the movement of the body and honour the ongoing becoming of bodily being. Feldenkrais proposes that a person's movement is the expression of one's being (1972): 'thus, how I move is who I am' (interview with an *ArtRose* member, January 2017).

This PhD set out to offer a comparative analysis of two field study groups, one with students in the Bachelor of Arts program in dance performance at the Palucca University and the other with the members of the *ArtRose* ensemble. The research for both groups investigated the potentialities for developing personal agency, self-regulated learning, and social consciousness through a fusion of sensory, imaginative and explorative methods put forth in the Feldenkrais Method® and expressed through contemporary dance practice. The research was carried out with both groups in the studios of the Palucca University. However, the differing constructs of the field study designs, one of ongoing practice research and the other based in participatory action research completed after 34 weeks of intervention in 2015<sup>8</sup>, coupled with my own increasing interest and involvement in research with dance art with elders and its artistic, social and political implications, led me to redirect the enquiry of this thesis solely to the work with the *ArtRose* ensemble.

### 1.3 Research Questions<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> This research was a part of a five- year federally funded research grant for investigating innovative teaching and learning strategies in vocational dance education. This project was named *InnoLernenTanz*. The research period was from 2012-2016. I authored and co-directed this project. The publication, 'Practicing Dance: A Somatic Orientation (in the German language edition *Tanz pratizieren, ein somatisch orientierter Ansatz*), of which I am editor and primary author was one of the results of this research and was published in 2016.

<sup>9</sup> I have decided for this thesis to use the term, 'practice' to denote the practice research that I have been undergoing for the past nine years. I am fully aware that the term 'praxis' denotes both the practical and theoretical components of enquiry. I feel that the word – practice – can be used to notate – practice as research – and that it does not need to be transformed into the word- praxis – to denote the interaction of practice and research. The practice of the *ArtRose* includes reflection, analysis, evaluation, and creation. Therefore, the term praxis for our practice is fully legitimate, but I prefer to use practice to describe this practice-as-research.

Embedded in artistic, socio-political, ethical, and educational contexts, the research considers both pragmatic and existential questions about human existence through the perspective of somatic dance experience inscribed in the environment in which the experiences are taking place. They are interrelated and address the potentialities for developing individual and collective agency and artistic expressivity through the methods of a somatic and improvisational dance practice and performance informed by the Feldenkrais Method®. In addition, they investigate the means, strategies and ethics that might bring forth social cohesion so that a community in dance can self-sustain, and they consider the socio-cultural and political potentialities for the presence of dance art with older non-trained dancers as a visible part of Germany's contemporary cultural expression. Specifically, the research questions ask:

- How does the practice of *ArtRose* facilitated through the Feldenkrais Method® encourage the growth of both individual artistic expressiveness and cooperative choreographic processes? What are the parameters that enable the assessment of these impacts?
- To what extent can the methods and strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® be freely applied in the practice without compromising the integrity of the method itself?
- To what extent do socio-ethical relations influence the individual and group processes and condition the self-sustainability of the *ArtRose* community?
- What are the socio-political ramifications for collaborative practice and performance of dance art with non-trained older dancing people in the mainstream of Germany's cultural landscape? How does the *ArtRose* ensemble contribute to the understanding and valuation of this form of dance practice and performance?

- How might the ethics of this form of relational practice impact personal spirituality and thereby condition communicative processes of interaction?

## 1.4 Research Field

This thesis offers a framework for understanding the practice in the *ArtRose* ensemble as the interrelation of the ethical, pedagogical, creative and social conditions that can effectively engender an environment in which both expressivity and skill in dance and dance performance can develop and flourish. Therefore, the research outcomes are predicated upon the multifarious ways in which the ensemble members communicate with each other. This research prioritizes empathetic forms of embodied, situational and relational understanding as its epistemological foundation and investigates how the practice is experienced as a social somatic phenomenon. Phenomenologist and dancer Maxine Sheets-Johnstone posits that:

To do a phenomenological-hermeneutical study, one must be in touch with actual lived experience of the phenomenon one is investigating and with the beliefs, attitudes and values and experiences that foundational changes in thinking and praxis are revealed (1984: 143).

The ethos of this ensemble is powered by a social somatic consciousness that understands how one's way of being in the world is formed by the heritage, experiences and sociocultural habits in which one lives (Feldenkrais 1972, Johnson 1992). The practice in the *ArtRose* ensemble is the interrelation of the ethical, pedagogical, creative and social conditions that can effectively engender an environment in which both the individual and collective experience of agency, affect and creativity can develop and flourish. Therefore, the creative and intellectual enquires of this thesis are embedded in philosophical, practice-oriented, and social-theoretical domains that espouse a phenomenological perspective. The dynamic relation between these interdisciplinary subject areas demonstrates the reciprocity of enquiry between dance practice and theoretical enquiries that locate this thesis in the field of practice-as-research.

Guiding my practice research is the question of what the techniques or skill sets for successful practice and performance in community settings in Germany might be and if their parameters are measured, evaluated, and determined solely on physical virtuosity. Dance artist Wendell Beavers advanced the idea that technique has come to mean ‘the principles of organization which underlie mind/body response’ (2008: 129). Dance scholar Jaana Parviainen considers dance technique to be the skills and materials that create the actualities and potentialities that enable dancers to execute the tasks at hand (2003: 161). Performance theorist Ben Spatz describes technique as both embodied practice and research that structures actions by offering a range of relatively reliable pathways through given situations. Rather than regarding technique as something that can be aesthetically mastered, served, and reproduced through the dancer’s body, he posits that a technique of embodied practice and research permits individual artistic freedom and empowers the dance artist with the artistry to act with agency, reflection, and creativity (2015: 26).

These propositions can be translated to the context of non-trained dancers who are working with a professional attitude, as is the case with *ArtRose*. Indeed, this position aligns with somatic approaches to dance technique, those which help artists harvest from an inner authority and trust their perceptions of the experienced and experiencing body, imbued with a consciousness that these processes unfold in ever-changing patterns of situated relationships (Coogan 2016: 33). This deliberation invites willingness and openness for the (re)consideration of cultural presuppositions regarding for whom the concert stages and public funding in the German cultural environment are available and primarily reserved. Furthermore, in the neo-liberalistic world and in consideration of the demographic change, the question of belonging addresses all members of society and is most relevant for the well-being of great numbers of the world’s aging population. What does it mean to belong? What significance does personal and collective responsibility hold for the sustainability of a community of practice? As an aging dance professional, I am acutely aware of my own changing possibilities for expressivity and communication through physical dance practice. Therefore, my practice is in a continuous state of modification in congruence

with the person that I am becoming. As a result, my artistic and pedagogical focus has shifted from work with young aspiring performing dance professionals at the Palucca University to people engaging with dance artistry in the later stages of their lives in the community setting of *ArtRose*. Working with this ensemble both as practitioner and researcher affords me the opportunity to personally experience the existential questions put forth in this thesis and to research the potentialities for dance expressivity and artistry, belonging and spiritual well-being in a community of shared responsibility in which skill and expertise are defined by individual intention.

### **1.5 Historical Perspective and Expressionist Dance**

The reintroduction of non-Cartesian thought and practice during the nineteenth century established the terrain from which body-based holistic (somatic) systems of enquiry and methods for learning and self-care emerged (Mangione 1993: 27). Credited as the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1858-1938) speaks of the soma as *Leib*, or 'the lived body,' acknowledging the body's capacity to realize its inborn intelligence as an integrated whole (Husserl, quoted in Parviainen 2002: 20). In the early twentieth century, German artists and educators, including Heinrich Jacoby (1889-1964), Elsa Gindler (1885-1961), Gerda Alexander (1908-1994), and Hungarian Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958), among others, were instrumental in fostering a *leibliche* (corporeal) encounter with dance in Germany. They shared a vision of embodiment that supported individual expressiveness and the return to 'a hidden sense of the wise, imaginative, and creative body' (Johnson 1995: xv), which reveals its life-forms from the soma outward. These pioneers proposed that kinaesthetic consciousness is central to creative expression. Thus, their practice was one of 'listening to the body' with antenna-like awareness and paying attention to the 'self that moves' (Johnson 1994: 181).

Out of this understanding grew one of the two German national dance identities of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the form of individualized, expressive dance called *Ausdruckstanz*. Mary Wigman (1886-1973), Gret Palucca (1902-1993), Harald Kreuzberg (1902-1968), Hilde

Holger (1905-2001) and Yvonne Georgi (1903-1975) are a few examples of solo dance artists in this tradition. The Swiss Jacques Dalcroze (1865-1950), Hungarian Rudolf von Laban (1879-1958), Czech Jarmila Kröschlová (1893-1983) and Austrian Carl Orff (1895-1982) worked with this expressionist idea with their relational systems of movement, word and music. Dance scholars Claudia Jeschke and Gabi Vettermann propose:

In their particular searches for 'true' expression, the protagonists of *Ausdruckstanz* fervently believed that the essence of an individual being led to the notion of a collective consciousness, allowing the performer to propagate a life through dance—a life in which everyone is deemed to be a dancer (2000: 57).

The creative practice and methods of the ensemble *ArtRose* source from and find inspiration in both the tradition of German *Ausdruckstanz* and the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic learning. The points of intersection between *Ausdruckstanz*, phenomenology and the emergence of somatic practices in the Anglosphere are many and include the principle that the movement of the body is the conduit for expressing lived experience and is therefore the source of tacit knowledge.

## **1.6 Somatic Perspectives**

Somatic studies are defined by phenomenology, existentialism, Eastern philosophy, educational constructivism, martial arts and yoga practices, as well by the advent of *Ausdruckstanz* and other modern-expressionistic dance forms (Eddy 2009). Century-old dance practices in the Asian, African, and Pacific continents are inherently underscored by a somatic understanding of bodily felt, intuitive knowledge, ones from which the Western world can profit and learn (Fraleigh 1987, Johnson 1997, Eddy 2002).

Somatic investigations in dance education and practice in Europe and in the USA have harvested from the initial enquiries dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Myers 1983, Fortin 1993). Approaches that emphasize 'learning how to learn' in their methodology are referred to as 'somatic education' systems (Holdaway, Kovich and Simmonds 2002: 20, Joly 2004: 6). These practices respect the integrative and

embodied soma and explore idiosyncratic experiences, body structure and functional bodily organization (Eddy 2009). Commonalities of somatic practices include:

- Slowing down to feel and pay attention to bodily cues
- Releasing the body into gravity with breath support
- Reducing tension and discovering new patterns of coordination
- Becoming more aware of how to live and move in three-dimensional space

(Eddy, Williamson, and Weber 2014: 168).

In the 1970s, philosopher and practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method Thomas Hanna, a key initiator of the somatic movement in the USA described Somatics as ‘a field of study dealing with somatic phenomena: i.e., the human being as experienced by himself from the inside’ (1995: 343). This phenomenological first-person (or experiential) viewpoint stands in contrast to a third person (or more objectified) perspective. These first and third person viewpoints demonstrate the difference between the felt sense of one’s action and the objectifying external view. The somatic perspective prioritizes the inner felt sense of the action that may be observed by the outer gaze. Regardless, there is an undeniable link between these two perspectives, as one’s internally felt movement often corresponds to its outer representation.

Indicative of this congruency is the way one directs one’s internally focused attention to the movement at hand. The internal attention and direction of one’s movement leads to a synergy between the felt experience and the movement’s outward representation. In this sense, perception and representation coalesce (Batson and Wilson 2014). Elaborating on this idea, Hanna speaks of somatics as the interrelation between awareness, biological function, and the environment, experienced as a synergetic whole (1976: 31). A somatic perspective thus acknowledges that thoughts, emotions, feelings, and imagination are all manifestations of an indivisible totality found in each person’s biological and neurological makeup (Joly 2004: 5). Scholars Penelope Hanstein and Sondra Fraleigh speak of somatics as a venue ‘to release human potential through revealing movement habits and imposing neurological pathways with new movement choices’ (1999: 208). Somatic learning links body and

mind by paying attention to sensory phenomena that often result from movement, whether executed or imagined. Therefore, by learning somatically, one pays attention to the intimate interrelation of sensory stimuli, perceptual interpretation, and motor processing (Steinmüller, Schaefer and Fortwängler 2001: 108, Cohen 1993: 114). Somatic scholar Glenna Batson posits that a hallmark of somatics is the method of learning to attend to sensory phenomena arising within a structured movement environment (Batson and Wilson 2014: 129). Self and self-perception are essential in the practice of Somatics, yet they cannot exist without the intersubjective relation of self to other and the world/community. Somatic responses approaches and withdrawals, for example, are all specific relational modes of being that cultivate experiences of the lived body, sensory appreciation, and awareness through movement of oneself in the world (Fraleigh 2018: 2-5). The movement environment of the *ArtRose* ensemble offers a somatic movement environment of which phenomenologist and somatic practitioners speaks. Indeed, the foundation of this doctoral thesis underlying its philosophical, methodological, and theoretical positions as well as its practice, process and outcome, is based in a somatic consciousness of being and relating in the world. The Feldenkrais Method® of somatic learning is the specific somatic practice from which this thesis harvests.

## **1.7 The Feldenkrais Method® of Somatic Learning**

With Feldenkrais, one attends to one's movement intentions with an experimental attitude, rather than to the achievement of a goal. Learning is self-directed and avoids judgment and interpretation. It is a method that invites the practitioner to reflect upon where one is now in the present, not from where one wishes to be (Sheets-Johnstone 1979: 6). Feldenkrais writes that this quality of learning is guided only by the sensation of satisfaction when each attempt feels less awkward or difficult (1981: 30). The environment encourages participants to move from one present moment to the next, freed from anxieties connected to the past or the anticipated future, in a process of self-(re)discovery. Discernment in movement is predicated on the positive kinaesthetic



feedback loop of ease, lightness, and pleasure (Coogan 2016: 33). Therefore, through engaging with the strategies of the Feldenkrais Method, the practitioners might recognize well-coordinated movement when its execution is easy (Feldenkrais 1980: 4). The purpose and function of lessons in the Feldenkrais Method® arise organically and are revealed to the individual in the process of doing.

In this method one is asked to depart from certainty and to recalibrate assumptions about where knowledge lies (Coogan 2016: 34). The method draws on the individual's innate competencies for self-learning through processes of awareness and invites all participants in a mutually intended search for potential options for action in order to act from a place of choice. As this method does not offer a specific skill set of movement to be learned, there can be no 'failure'. Therefore, regardless of individual movement skill, the starting condition for all is the same: self-directed learning with the intention and curiosity to discover something new. The method's procedures are those of structured improvisation and thus can be fluidly translated into a situation of dance improvisation. Feldenkrais posited that 'when you know what you are doing you can do what you want' (1972). Learning to move from a place of enhanced ease and well-being, one that seeks congruence between intention and action can lead not only to enhanced artistic expression, but also a richer sense of agency and self-authority (Peters and Sieben 2009, Kampe 2015).

## **1.8 Social Somatics**

Somatic education is about being present in oneself whilst at the same time being present, active, and reactive in the environment to which one is relating. Somatic scholar Jill Green coined the term 'social somatics' (2002) to emphasise how the individual's inner world is engaging in never-ending dialogue with the external environment. Green's idea of social somatics finds its theoretical pairing in enaction theory. Articulated by Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleanor Rosch (1991), enaction theory views cognition as grounded in the sensorimotor dynamics of the interactions that occur between a living organism and its environment. It represents an

approach to embodied cognitive science in which knowledge is constructed by an agent through their sensorimotor interactions with the environment, which are both interactively and intersubjectively connected (Coogan 2016: 25). Both enaction and somatic theories concede a preeminent place to processes of socialization and the influence of the environment in the formation of the soma and the regulation of its interactions in the world. These theories assert that a person's body image, the shape(s) into which their body grows and changes, is created through social exchange (Noë 2004, Kampe 2015). Enaction theory evolved in part out of a constructivist model that prioritized the growing consensus that the individual is not the representation of a preestablished world by a preestablished mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind resulting from the history of the variety of their actions in the world (Varela, Thompson, Rosch 1991: 9). As both enaction and social somatic theory are concerned with self-reflection, autonomy, and embodiment, as well as sense-making and intersubjective interaction (Warburton 2011: 67, Batson and Wilson 2014: 91), I argue that it is necessary to consider the parallels between these two positions and their relevance for this thesis as it is one based in intersubjective interaction and the relationship of community and self-knowledge.

## **1.9 Chapter Outline**

This thesis investigates theories and modes of practice by which to organize, maintain and sustain community through social responsibility and individual artistic development in a manner that enriches individuality through heightened solidarity. The practice research of this thesis reveals how method, process and result overlap and are inseparable. Intuition, experience, and tacit knowledge are intertwined with, and supported by somatic, theoretical and philosophical perspectives in such a way that the practice and the theory merge into a unified entity. The theoretical and philosophical underpinnings that I have chosen for this thesis are ones to which I feel deeply connected. This synergy is necessary due to my immersion in the research field,

as I must not only be committed to, but also enact the matter of what I am researching.

The thesis is divided into eight chapters. Due to its multidisciplinary content, each chapter introduces and integrates references to the literature in ways that are relevant to the subject matter under discussion. **Chapter Two: Contextual and Methodological Framework** puts forth the research paradigms, the methodology and the methods used to investigate the questions located within a 'community in dance' in practice and performance. The mode of enquiry of this thesis combines two distinct yet interrelated methodologies that privilege sense, sensation, and intuition in order to explore the ethical, artistic, and socio-political efficacies of somatically informed improvised dance and collaborative dance making and performance in an amateur setting with older adults. After a brief description of the research field, this chapter unfolds the epistemological and ontological assumptions of this thesis and its interdisciplinary thought and mixed-methods procedures. Moving forward, it addresses the research methodologies undertaken to investigate the research queries: practice-as-research, in which the practical verification is a part of the enquiry process itself, and Participatory Action Research which looks towards enacting change in the research environment. A brief reflection on the ongoing research process concludes this chapter. **Chapter Three: Community, the *Laientanz* Movement in Germany, Amateur and Community Dance, a 'Community in Dance'** offers the historical context for the understanding of *Laientanz* and Community Dance in Germany. The literature reviewed relates to the history of the lay dance movement in Germany beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century and considers the different trajectories this movement took in a divided German nation. In addition, this chapter looks to the emerging sector of Community Dance in Germany and how it is understood, appreciated, and experienced. It considers the relationship of professional and amateur dance practice and performance and the place of dance and dance education in German society. The placement of the *ArtRose* ensemble in this field is identified. This chapter concludes with an exposition of my rationale for the use of the expression 'community in dance' to describe the *ArtRose* ensemble. **Chapter Four: Social Theory** reviews the literature that revolves around social theoretical

perspectives and methods for community building and its sustainability. Central viewpoints relevant for this thesis are harvested from John Dewey's (1859-1952) theory of democracy and education (1917), which conjecture that action connected to personal interest is the vehicle for the advancement of knowledge and reflective thought; Étienne Wenger (1952-) and Jean Lave's (1939) theory of communities of practice (1998) that offers a pragmatic manner for the sustainability of communities; and the political implications that Hannah Arendt's (1906-1975) call to communicative action (1958) has in the *ArtRose* ensemble. Both Dewey and Arendt speak of the 'cooperative interaction in public will [and for that] formation is both the means and the end of individual self-realization' (Honneth 2014: 269). This point underlays the proceduralism and communicative processes of the *ArtRose* ensemble. This deliberation is included in order to understand the processes of community building in the *ArtRose* ensemble that contribute to its ability to self-sustain. In addition, this chapter explores the socio-political ramifications for collaborative practice and performance of dance art with non-trained older dancing people in the mainstream of Germany's cultural landscape and how this ensemble might contribute to the understanding and valuation of this form of dance practice and performance. **Chapter Five: A Philosophy of Dialogue** discusses Martin Buber's (1878-1965) philosophy of relation and demonstrates how his dialogic principle impacts upon the ethics in the *ArtRose* community. Buber's thought, that of the interplay between 'being' and 'doing' argues that true dialogue and genuine relation is inseparable from the pragmatism of daily life. This message invites the members of *ArtRose* to assume responsibility for the ongoingness of the group. This chapter puts forth an exposition and development of Buber's thought that includes an excursion into his most cited work, *I and Thou* (1937/1958). Buber's dialogic principle puts forth a spiritually infused relational practice that guides me as facilitator of the *ArtRose* community. Therefore, this chapter considers the influence of this ethical compass on the communicative processes of interaction within the ensemble. Throughout the chapter, analogies are drawn in the thought and practice of Martin Buber and Moshé Feldenkrais are in reference to how these ideas help to shape the practice in the *ArtRose* ensemble.

**Chapter Six: The Feldenkrais Method®** offers the pedagogical frame for this practice-as-research with the community *ArtRose*<sup>10</sup> and is the thread that weaves this thesis into a cohesive whole. This chapter begins with an exposition of fundamental characteristics of somatic dance, followed by a biographical account of the life of Moshé Feldenkrais (1904-1994) that demonstrates the inseparability of his life journey from the method that he created. An overview of the guiding tenets of this method and its two modes of practice follows. Throughout the chapter, examples of the implementation of the methods and strategies of this somatic movement system in the practice of *ArtRose* are made. Addressed is the question to which extent this method can be applied in a dance practice before its integrity might be lost. At core is the consideration of how and why the Feldenkrais ‘toolbox’ is effective in the *ArtRose* practice for the development of individual and collective agency and affect. This chapter fluidly unfolds into the section of this thesis that discusses the practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble. **Chapter Seven: The *ArtRose* Ensemble** This is the core chapter of this thesis and builds on all preceding chapters. It offers an in-depth description, discussion, and analysis of the practice as research that takes place in the *ArtRose* ensemble. Consequently, this is the most complex chapter of the thesis. It begins with a narrative of the forming and initial years of the ensemble and its research setting and structure. An ethnography of the participant group and description of the methods for data collection and analysis follows. This chapter reveals the methods, processes and procedures of the ensemble that include the integration of the Feldenkrais Method® in our practice, as well as an excursion into dance improvisation and its implications for the ageing body. Next, the procedures of practice and creation that include an exposé on the practical output of this thesis, the dance ‘*Mut und Gnade*,’ are discussed. In addition, the potentialities for older performing amateurs in contemporary concert dance within the framework of Germany’s cultural and aesthetic norms are considered. Thereby, questions are addressed concerning which paradigmatic shifts in

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<sup>10</sup> The ensemble *ArtRose* was founded in 2011. It is the environment that informs my practice-based research. Members are primarily non-trained dancing people between the ages of 60 and 80. The ensemble meets weekly to dance and to create dances together. In preparation for performance, meeting times are increased. A thesis chapter is devoted to the practice of *ArtRose*.

expectation of spectatorship might be necessary in order for audiences to understand, appreciate and accept dance performance art with older adults in the mainstream of Germany's cultural landscape more fully.

Voices of the *ArtRose* members gleaned through interviews, conversations, and questionnaires thread throughout the chapter. These comments of participants reflect not only momentary experience but also long-term development and transformation. Therefore, the participant responses are not individualised, but rather express common themes. Responses from participant observers and critical friends put forth in this chapter express personal momentary experiences with the ensemble. Reflective researcher writing endows this chapter with an auto-ethnographic perspective and thereby grants a voice to my lived experiences as an ensemble member. **Chapter Eight, Conclusion and Closing Remarks** draws the multidisciplinary threads of this thesis together. It reviews how the thesis, and its research questions contribute to the emerging body of new knowledge about the making and performing of dance art with older amateur adults in the German cultural landscape and synthesizes the overall findings of this practice research and offer the rationale for a first reading for the term, 'community in dance'. Problematics are identified, as is a vision for the future in which age and ageing in somatic dance art with amateurs is not relegated to inhabiting its own cultural sphere but can forge its place in the socio-cultural environments in which this expression is practiced. Finally, this doctoral thesis offers a closing argument that champions the validation of dance art with older adults both artistically and a form of democratic egalitarian intersubjectivity for the building and sustaining of communities in dance.

The following chapter offers the conceptual framework of this thesis, grounded in aesthetics, Somatics and phenomenology and its methodological imperatives: Participant Action Research and practice-as-research.

## Chapter 2

### Contextual and Methodological Framework

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. Pages where material has been removed are clearly marked in the electronic version. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

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Picture 1 *ArtRose* practice

Photo: Schröter

#### 2.1 Introduction

Methodology underpins research and gives credibility to its outcomes (Robson 2011, Wiskers 2008). Methodologies embedded in socio-cultural and political research are often qualitative in nature, as they consider and negotiate and help to clarify the interpersonal relations in the field (Trimingham 2002, Fraleigh and Hanstein 1999). This chapter puts forth the qualitative research paradigms and the methodology used to investigate the research questions of this thesis that address the development of individual artistic expressiveness, cooperative choreographic processes, and the sustainability of the 'community in dance', *ArtRose*. The methodological imperative of this thesis privileges sense, sensation, and intuition as its epistemological base. It

explores the socio-cultural and artistic efficacies of somatically informed improvised dance and dance making and performance in an amateur setting with untrained, older adult dancing people.

Scholars Sara Houston and Ashley McGill contend that 'a methodologically diverse way for researching is fundamental to capture the important aspects of a multi-faceted activity, such as dance' (2013: 103). Consequently, dance research calls for interdisciplinary designs that open multifarious pathways for addressing the complexity of the phenomenon of dance (Green and Stinson 1999). The interdisciplinary approach of this research combines practice-as-research, Participant Action Research, principles of the Feldenkrais Method®, a philosophy of relation and social theories of communicative action and experiential education, and all brought together under the lens of a philosophical phenomenological perspective.

The methodologies of this thesis address the research questions from the embodied experience of the researcher in the field. The first is practice-as-research, a methodology in which the creative artefact is considered as the embodiment of new knowledge and a partial verification of the research (Barrett 2010). Practice-as-research points towards a deepened relationship between artistic practice and scholarly inquiry. Its emphasis is placed on creative innovation in the given artistic research field (Nelson 2013) and aims to advance performance knowledge through the practice itself (Haseman 2010)<sup>11</sup>. The complementary methodology is Participant Action Research, one that fundamentally strives to effect change in the research environment through the research's involvement (Whitehead and MacNiff 2025). The baseline of these two methodologies is that practice/experience and research inform each other. As this thesis investigates the artistic, social, and cultural-political efficacies of the community in dance ensemble, *ArtRose*, it is essential that it includes a practical submission which is the dance piece, 'Mut und Gnade', a 45-minute work for

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<sup>11</sup> PARIP (Practice as Research in Performance) was hosted by Bristol University UK and ran from 2001-2006. It investigated practice-driven performative research projects in higher education in order to demonstrate their validity as a form of research on par with more traditional forms of investigation in the Academy. PARIP was AHRC-Funded.



15 performers and 1 musician. This work constitutes the practice segment of this thesis.

The critical reflection of the intuitive and instinctive research that I practice, and the artefacts produced in the *ArtRose* 'community in dance', are that which confirms the epistemological, ontological, and theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. As such, the knowledge acquired from the creative practice informs its critical explorations (Skains 2018). I do not read about theory and apply the acquired knowledge in my practice; rather, my experiences in the dance practice are echoed, supported and evaluated in the theory.

As a researcher fully immersed in the research field, I am writing from a broadly autoethnographic viewpoint (Ellis, Adams and Bochner 2010). This viewpoint sources from heuristic and phenomenological reflectivity and critical self-study that deepen my understanding of the *ArtRose* practice and allows me to question if the work is going as we wish, how it might be optimized, and how to evaluate the present in order to redirect or reframe for the future (Wisker 2008, Albright 2011). Everyone in the research field, consciously and/or unconsciously, positions themselves in the processes and outcomes of our dance practice and creation in relation to power, authority, knowledge, and truth (Weems 2006: 1007).

As I am both subject and object of this inquiry, a contextualization of the structure and ethos of the research field is essential for understanding my rationale for the methodological choices and procedures undertaken to investigate the research queries. Consequently, this chapter begins with a description of both the research field and how dance and aesthetics are understood in this context. An unfolding of the epistemological and ontological assumptions of this research and its interdisciplinary thought and modes of inquiry follows. A brief reflection on the ongoing research process brings this chapter to a close.

## 2.2 Contextualizing the Research Environment

In undertaking this thesis, it has become increasingly apparent to me how my personal biases, social, cultural, and experiential, permeate how I approach, practice, reflect, understand, and write about the research. As a fully participating member in the research field, I cannot eliminate these biases, as they reflect my own embodied experience. In the research field I am not the representative of the others; rather, there is no distance between me, the researcher, and the respondents. As such, I am conducting research on myself in the company of others (McNiff and Whitehead 2005, Wisker 2008). Therefore, the idea of creating an objective viewpoint from a subjective vantage is illusory, as I am 'bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which – regardless of ultimate truth or falsity – become partially self-validating' (Batson 1972: 314). My own subjective standpoints underlie the epistemological, ontological, methodological, theoretical, and philosophical perspectives of this thesis and influence the interactive processes in the research field. From a phenomenological perspective, everything is always relative in terms of one's own experience, embedded in its historical and cultural contexts (Cooper Albright 2011, Sheets-Johnstone 2015) and understood and interpreted within this frame. Indeed, philosophers have long been concerned with the nature of interpretation and have approached the matter differently. Some argue that there is no method of interpretation per se because everything involves the individual's subjective interpretation (Schwandt 2000). As such, I have sought to distil my relative truth in the context of this artistic and socio-political research.

Performance scholar Bew Kershaw locates one's subjectivity in the social context as he proposes: 'We are embedded in the ecology that we inhabit, in a sphere of mutual influence' (2016: 270). The research ecology that I inhabit as participant observer, researcher, dancer, performer, and facilitator is one 'where meanings and commitments flow between lives, and people [...] perceive themselves not as separate entities, though still individuals, but as sharing [moments] of the same life span' [...] (McNiff and Whitehead 2005: 26). The environment is one that investigates and seeks to understand the meanings that become manifest in the relational processes in the

*ArtRose* corporeality in which identity, agency, and signatures of creative dance expression form and re-form through collaborative dancing, dance making and dance performance. The research site is interactive and therefore involves the negotiation of socio-political and ethical issues, both theoretical and pragmatic. As facilitator in this environment, relation is understood as reciprocal; a condition of mutual exchange (Glaser 1982). Educationalist Patti Lather speaks of reciprocity in research as ‘the desire for equitable and mutual beneficial relationships between all participants’ (1986: 265). Symmetrical relations of responsibility and power are necessary for reciprocity, empathy, and equality,<sup>12</sup> (Buber 2010, Rodgers 2002) as they encourage an understanding of the lifeworlds of the participants and their cultural, social, and historical repercussions and also include disagreements, settlement, and distillation (Weems 2006). This presupposition makes reciprocity part of larger intersubjective and emancipatory research agendas.

In my multifaceted roles, I aim to encourage a climate of mutual identification based in the dignity and respect for differing perspectives and the distribution of power and responsibility so that all participants can be equally involved in the construction and validation of the tacit knowledge that emerges (Glaser 1982: 50, Magolda 2000: 141). Despite the desired and assumed horizontal pathways of communication, I am obliged to continually question responsibility and authority in our community and reflect upon the degrees of complicity in our interactions. Therefore, a significant component of the methodological procedures of the dance art practice in the *ArtRose* community involves both ongoing intersubjective dialogue in the field and researcher reflectivity.

The practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble is one of scored improvisation that sources from the somatic principles and strategies of the Feldenkrais Method®. I offer movement cues in a manner that invites all members into a shared environment of fluid and interchangeable leadership. Everyone has the possibility to modify, adapt or redirect my initial proposals. Our dance and dance making processes encourage all participants to experience proprioceptively the shaping of our bodyminds from the inside out, from

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<sup>12</sup> Reciprocity will be discussed in length in chapter 5 in relation to Martin Buber’s philosophy of dialogue.

the first-person or somatic perspective of Contextual and Methodological Framework-being and becoming. The creation and performance of the practical submission of this thesis, *'Mut und Gnade'* is a dance of shared responsibility that aims to cultivate a responsiveness that can support one's ability to differentiate and to respond to stimuli from both one's internal being and the external world. This sense-ability can facilitate genuine dialogue in the intra- and inter-personal experiences of agency, presence and affect in the environment that we are creating. The underlying theme of this work explores *leadingfollowing*, the intra-and interaction of oneself with others, in experiencing states of transformation and renewal.

## 2.3 Structure of the Community

The ongoing practice research of this thesis examines the conditions that facilitate the sustainability of this ensemble as a self-determined, autonomous system, that I term as a 'community in dance'<sup>13</sup>. Cognitive scientist Evan Thompson speaks of autonomy in two different but complementary senses: one as self-determination and the other as organizational closure (2007). He suggests the following: 'An autonomous system is a self-determining system, as distinguished from a system determined from the outside, or a heteronomous system' (2007: 37) [...] All such closed (or autonomous) systems [...] need to be seen as sources of their own activity, specifying their own domain of interactions' (2007: 46). Therefore, autonomy can be understood as a form of self-government, a system that follows its own rules and codes of ethics. In this sense, the *ArtRose* community in dance can be appreciated as a self-determined system of personal autonomy and organizational closure, as it is fully self-governing and decoupled from any state or institutional patronage or support<sup>14</sup>. This means that all

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<sup>13</sup> The definition of a 'community and dance' is part of Chapter 3.

<sup>14</sup> Five of the ensemble's seven productions were created, produced, and performed without patronage or external financial support. The work, *'Mut und Gnade'*, the practical submission of this thesis was a co-production with the departments of Stage and Costume Design at the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden. Students contributed to the costume, stage and light design as part of their curricular requirements and the production was presented in the academy's theatre.

members must assume both personal and collective responsibility for the continuity of the community, a condition allows for both structural and creative independence.

The autonomy of the *ArtRose* community aligns with the concept of autopoiesis expounded by biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela (1984). Autopoiesis 'defines the nature of living systems as autonomous and operationally closed' (Koch and Fischman 2011: 59). In other words, the processes of autopoiesis allow the system to maintain its autonomy whilst at the same time being embedded in the environmental dynamics of change. The dynamics of change as defined by Maturana and Varela are processes of sensorimotor coupling in which the external world can only trigger the release of internally determined activity, which may in turn possibly lead to structural reorganization without changing the system's identity (1985, 1994). Autopoiesis proposes that a system can sustain and regenerate when its components uniformly concur with the conditions that make this system unique. Indeed, sustainability can be described as a living system which has the capacity for interdependent self-renewal. Reliance on external agency means that a system can collapse if the agency is withdrawn, whereas internal capacity means the interdependent creation of renewable resources for growth supports the continuity of the system (Vallalobos and Ward 2013: 5-7).

For the *ArtRose* community in dance, this means that there are certain fundamental conditions of interaction that are mutually agreed upon and must be ever present in our world of practice in order for the group to maintain its autonomy, integrity, and continuity as a self-sustaining system. These conditions are shared responsibility, a deep acceptance of alterity, positive value Action<sup>15</sup> of everyone's contribution to the practice, and decentralized authority. The *ArtRose* ecology or corporeality is not one in which its parts (individuals) form to make a whole (community), nor one whose whole is more than the sum of its parts, but one that considers that the form and content of the parts change in relation to the whole and that both the whole and its parts are in a

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<sup>15</sup> Borrowing from Anna Halprin's RSVP cycle that eliminates an overriding judgement of a scoring cycle by placing emphasis on the value of the action rather than a valuation of the entire process. Action in this sense is inherently positive; hence, valueAction (Wittman, Shorn and Land 2014).

constant state of becoming. Thus, this community in dance is one that resists closure, one that moves forth in states of transformation. This notion defines the methodological concept of the double hermeneutic spiral that illuminates the essential interrelation of parts to wholes and of wholes to parts that remain in continual states of interaction (Brogden 2010). All members of the *ArtRose* community are responsible for the direction and redirection of the practice. All significant decisions are taken collectively. The years of practice research with the *ArtRose* ensemble have demonstrated that it is the shared responsibility, the willingness to disagree in order to find agreement, that defines the ethos of our community and endows it with its stability regardless of membership fluctuation.

## **2.4 Contextualizing Key Terms: Dance and Aesthetics**

It is not only the ethical and social construct of the *ArtRose* ensemble that enable its continuity, but also an understanding of dance that prioritizes individual expressivity, conditioned by the cultural milieu from which the dance movement emanates. This is one devoid of presuppositions of – what a body can do – and instead understands dance, as in the words of anthropologist Judith Lynn Hanna as

a cultural, institutional intervention in a psychobiological domain of motor activity which is composed from the dancer's perspective of purposeful, intentionally rhythmical, and culturally patterned sequences of nonverbal body movement and gesture, which are not ordinary motor activities, the motion having inherent, and 'aesthetic' value (1975: 40).

Hanna's statement positions dance as both a form of socio-political agency and a way to construct the rhythms of an individual's lived experience, that can bring into play performance creation and embodied interaction. Hanna's reflections about dance echos the credo of the *ArtRose* community in dance.

Aesthetics offers information about somatopsychic experience and can be regarded as a set of principles concerned with the appreciation, enjoyment, and valuation of beauty or of that which one is experiencing (Nakajima 2017: 12). What might seem

beautiful to one person is the outcome of that person's conception of art. Philosopher Jacques Rancière posits that aesthetics is a term without universal meaning and refers aesthetics

[...] to a specific regime for identifying and reflecting on the arts: a mode of articulation between ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their relationships which presupposes a certain idea of thought effectivity (2004: 10).

Rancière's thought provides the bridge from aesthetics to politics, as politics distributes the information that is seen and spoken to members of community. Art critic Hal Foster supports this proposition with the claim that one is never outside of representation of time nor cultural context and therefore never outside the politics of the time (1983). Therefore, politics is, in principle, aesthetic because it reconfigures the common field of what is seeable and sayable (Nakajima 2017). Social values, institutional priority and political will determine what gets marginalized and what gets valued. 'Classical aesthetics focuses on the idealized formulations of beauty and has thus been resistant to and thus framed by strong sensations of disgust often associated with the process of aging or old age and the female gender' (Nakajima 2017: 16-17). Thus, the older, non-trained dancing body in performance represents the opposite of what was or still is regarded to have aesthetic value in terms of the traditional understanding of aesthetics in the western world, including Germany.

Despite the radical transformation and reconsideration of aesthetic appreciation and value brought on in the postmodern era of the 1960's in New York City, exemplified in the Judson Church Movement that heralded the presupposition that every movement can be a dance movement (Burt 2006), and supported by Hanna's definition of dance and Rudolf von Laban's proclamation that everyone can be a dancer (Müller and Stöckemann 1993), there is still little visibility granted to ensembles of older amateur dancing persons in the German cultural landscape. The postulation that 'every movement can be a dance movement' presupposes that the clarity of intention in which the movement is put forward into the world can be appreciated and valued as dance, regardless of the movement itself. In this conceptual understanding, the body is

not the instrument of the dance but the dance itself. Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty substantiates this claim with his proposition that ‘movement in the mover... [who] does not translate ready-made meanings but accomplishes them’ (2014: 178).

As such, I see the dance making and performing in the *ArtRose* ensemble as an experience potent with aesthetic value. In his seminal work, *Art as Experience*, experiential educationalist John Dewey speaks of the intrinsic aestheticism of everyday life and traces both the ways in which everyday experience might be aestheticized and the ways in which the aesthetic is sanctioned off as a distinct realm of experience (2005: 198-200). He writes that experience is a product, one might almost say a by-product, of continuous and cumulative interaction of an organic self with the world. For Dewey, this is the foundation upon which his aesthetic theory and criticism builds. In *Art as Experience*, his aesthetic theory relates that the biological sensory exchange between people, whom he calls the *Live Creatures*, and the environment is an aesthetic experience and carries with it an aesthetic value, unfettered from the aesthetics of cultural norms (2005: 11-13). As such, aesthetic experience, and aesthetic value in the *ArtRose* dance ensemble are somatically conditioned by the individual’s authentic engagement and intention in the embodied dance that is brought into the world.

Awareness of the somatic expressiveness of the body is fundamental for the aesthetic experience of dance in the *ArtRose* ensemble. As most of the dancers in this ensemble have relatively reduced experiences in using their bodies in ways that are ‘known’ in dance vocabulary, our practice sources from the phenomenological rather than from the representational context to best understand the relation between aesthetic value and aesthetic experience. The rationale of this thesis supports the idea that the *lived body* aesthetic experience is the base for determining the aesthetic value of the dance in the *ArtRose* community, be it in weekly practice or in performative situations.



## 2.5 Mixed-Methods

### 2.5.1 Mixed-Methods: Somatics

The methods of this research are based in somatic learning. The etymological root of Somatics derives from the Greek word *Somatikos or Soma*, defined as ‘that pertaining to the body, experienced and regulated from within, encompassing the dimensions of body, psyche, and spirit’ (Fraleigh 2014: 251). In the 1970s, philosopher and Feldenkrais teacher Thomas Hanna, a key initiator of the somatic movement in the Anglosphere, described Somatics as ‘a field of study dealing with somatic phenomena: i.e., the human being as experienced by himself from the inside’ (1995: 343). This phenomenological first-person or experiential viewpoint stands in contrast to a third-person, or more objectified perspective, of what something should represent. Elaborating on this, Hanna speaks of Somatics as the interrelation between awareness, biological function, and the environment experienced as a synergetic whole (1976: 39). A somatic perspective thus acknowledges that thoughts, emotions, feelings, and imagination are all manifestations of an indivisible totality found in each person’s biological and neurological makeup (Joly 2004: 5). This is not the body as an instrument, to be sculpted into a preordained form, but the fluid bodily becoming of one’s being.

The term Somatics has a diverse and interdisciplinary history, as it is influenced by phenomenological, existential, and Eastern philosophy and thought, educational constructivism, martial arts practices and yoga, as well as the advent of modern/expressionistic dance (Eddy 2009, 2015). The reintroduction of non-Cartesian thought and practice during the nineteenth century established the terrain from which body-based holistic (somatic) systems of enquiry and methods for learning and self-care emerged (Mangione 1993: 27). Philosophical phenomenologist Edmund Husserl speaks of the double constitution of embodiment as *Leib*, or the *lived body*, the subject of perception viewed through the personal first-person perspective, and the *Körper* (body) or the naturalistic third person perspective of the body as a physical thing (Wehrle and Doyon 2019: 1). The combination of the two, *Leibkörper*, acknowledges

the body's capacity to realize its inborn intelligence as an integrated whole (Parviainen 2002: 69).

As mentioned in Chapter 1, early 20<sup>th</sup> century artists and educators were instrumental in fostering a *leibliche* or *Leibkörper* encounter with dance in Germany. They shared a vision of somatic embodiment that supported individual expressiveness and the return to 'a hidden sense of the wise, imaginative, and creative body' (Johnson 1995: xv) that reveals its life-forms from the soma outward. Their practice was quiet, pragmatic, and subtle—as in 'listening to the body' with antenna-like awareness and paying attention to the 'self that moves' (Johnson 1995: 181). In addition, these pioneers proposed that kinaesthetic awareness is central to creative expression (Sieben: 2007). 'The positive outcomes of their inquiries and explorations based in non-corrective practice give credence to the seeking of internal awareness through attentive dialogue with oneself' (Eddy 2014: 288). The development of somatic movement practices in dance training and education draws on this tradition. Somatic scholars Batson and Kampe propose somatic education to be an emancipatory and world-constituting education whose hallmarks are self-reflection and embodied empathy, one that is 'potentially transformative not only for the individual (as dancer), but for the larger scope of our collective humanness' (2017). Philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty proposes: 'It is through my body that I understand other people' (2014: 186)

Despite Germany's rich cultural heritage of non-dualistic thought, and the work of the country's somatic pioneers, generations of the development of multifarious somatic practices, fusions of dance and somatics have been slow to be incorporated into the greater dance culture in Germany (Sieben 2007, Coogan 2016)<sup>16</sup>. In this sense the

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<sup>16</sup> Somatic practices were at first acknowledged as adjuncts to, or particularly recuperative support for dance technique (Brodie and Lobel 2012; Myers 1983) as understood as codified canons of movement vocabulary that carry with them a particular aesthetic form. The shift in dance education in the place of 'Somatics' as being a curricular 'adjunct' for dance conditioning, to its being acknowledged as a fundamental strategy for organizing the skill set offered in the specific practice (Alexander 2015; Reed 2015; Fortin, Vieira and Tremblay 2009); thus, *sui generis* as a powerful medium for training reflective and autonomous dancers lasted the greater part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (2017: Batson and Kampe, Dance fields Conference Book of Abstracts).

practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble offers an innovative example of community dance practice and performance in this cultural context.

Somatically informed dance practice invites the dancer to shift her focus from the external modelling of movement to the interplay between action and perception, attuning to the sensate qualities of the information coming from bodily movement embedded in the environmental context. Therefore thought, emotions, sensations, and imagination are experienced in the muscle structure, cardiac rhythm, breathing, and posture, as well as in how the body manifests movement through space (Damasio 1994). Dancing in a state of somatic awareness respects the integrative and embodied soma and explores idiosyncratic experiences, body structure, and functional bodily organization (Ginot 2010, Eddy 2009), making it both a neuromuscular and affective experience of tacit knowledge.

Working somatically the dancer pays attention to letting forms of movement emerge from an inner authority, trusting the perceptions of her experienced and experiencing body, imbued with a consciousness that these processes unfold in ever-changing patterns of situated relationships (Coogan 2016: 17). Attention is directed to the interaction between sensory stimuli, perceptual interpretation, and motor processing (Steinmüller, Schaefer, and Fortwängler 2001: 108) that support the learners to attune to the deep self-logic of the nervous system's balancing and self-regulating processes (Fortin, Vieira and Tremblay 2003, Johnson 1995). Perception can be understood as the act that links the sensory and motor components of learning. Developmental studies demonstrate that perception is intermodal from the very beginning, and that it is not an intellectual accomplishment acquired after much practice, but an innate feature of embodied experience (Gallagher and Meltzoff 1996: 214).

Somatic based approaches in dance offer a non-valuation of one's felt and embodied experience. Preferred formats for transmission are explorative, directive and task based (Coogan 2016, Brodie and Lobel 2012, Fortin 2003). Somatic (re)education, as it is sometimes referred (Eddy 2014), fosters a process of kinaesthetic inquiry that can lead to the discovery of one's potential for learning, as well as to heighten one's

awareness of habitual movement and thinking patterns. The result can be improved efficiency and overall well-being (Batson 2007: 146, Hanna 1995: 348). Bringing these qualities of awareness, both alone and in the sharing with others can be a means for change that supports improved bodily functioning, a sense of self and the capacity to relate to others in an ethical and integral manner (Green 2015, Eddy 2015, Fortin 2003, 2002). Sondra Fraleigh proposes that the self and self-perception are essential for Somatics; however, they must be coupled with self-world and other. This idea, similar to Green's theory of social somatics (2002) as mentioned in chapter 1, is the perspective of phenomenology, meaning that the individual ego cannot be separated from the world. As the world and others are the conditions by which the self is known (2015: 2). With the following metaphor, philosopher Alva Noë aligns the social consciousness of Somatics to dance:

[...] when we look at dance, ...We see the world... as a domain for action...We encounter the meaningful world of our possible action. What we see when we look at dance is the environment, the surroundings, the *Umgebung*... the world as it correlates with our embodied perceptual orientation to it. We enact our perceptual world by attuning ourselves to it (2007: 125-127).

Somatics demonstrate that people perceive their worlds, their environments as processes of bodily felt experiences that can be identified in cultural practices (Noë 2004, Warburton 2011: 67, Batson and Wilson 2014: 91). Dance artist and scholar Edward Warburton has coined an expression called dance enaction. This posits that 'humans are autonomous agents whose cognitive selves are brought into being through interaction in the environment. In relation to dance the enactive approach views knowledge as constructed in action through emergent and self-organizing processes' (2019: 69).

### **2.5.2 Mixed-Methods: The Feldenkrais Method®**

The philosophy and strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic learning offer the scaffolding for the practical strategies of this thesis. This section offers a brief exposition of the thought and methods of this practice in relation to the thesis'

methodological construct. Chapter 5 is devoted to an in-depth reflection on this method in relation to dance and delineates its practical applications in the creative practices of the *ArtRose* ensemble.

The Feldenkrais Method® aligns with the epistemological underpinnings of constructivism, a perspective that precludes the notion of an objective, or singular reality. Hence, knowledge is constructed from one's own individual lifeworld as an ongoing, self-organized creation based on the relation of an individual's past experiences to the present ones (von Glasersfeld 1995). Learning is therefore understood as a continuous cyclical process, a spiral-like phenomenon, that proceeds from the individual's engagement with and in re-adaptation to the larger environmental factors in the world (Rodgers 2002). This viewpoint is not only that of the Feldenkrais Method® and constructivism; but also articulates Dewey's theory of education and democracy (1933), the theoretical base of this thesis.

As learning is a process that integrates the present with the past, new learning or new knowledge can offer a more comprehensive understanding of patterns that might already exist (Feldenkrais 1972, Dewey 1938). In the Feldenkrais Method®, learning often means finding variations of that what is already 'known' both to expand one's repertory of action and behaviour and to understand the interrelation between one's intentions and one's actions. Feldenkrais posits that for an action to be known, it should have at least three possible ways for its execution (1972). Therefore, alternatives for the same action, be they in dance or otherwise, give the performer the possibility to carry out her action in a manner conditioned to the situation and executed from a condition of informed choice. Feldenkrais called this, mature behaviour. Compulsive behaviour he defined as behaviour executed without option (1985). Practicing dance in the *ArtRose* ensemble means sourcing from embedded habits and patterns. Our practice seeks to find variation and novel ways of experiencing and expressing that which as is already, in some way, known or familiar to us.

Feldenkrais describes learning as the intermingling of heritage (both biological and cultural), education (as described above) and foremost, self-education, or self-directed and self-regulated learning. Therefore, learning cannot be separated from how it is learned and how it is utilized (Feldenkrais 1985; Luhmann 1995). He speaks of learning as:

[...] individual; and without a teacher who is striving for results within a certain time, it lasts as long as the learner keeps at it. This organic learning is slow, and unconcerned with any judgment as to the achievement of good or bad results. It has no obvious purpose or goal. It is guided only by the sensation of satisfaction when each attempt feels less awkward as the result of avoiding a former minor error which felt unpleasant or difficult (1981: 30).

This understanding of learning is fundamentally self-directed. Feldenkrais predicates the discernment for improvement in movement on the positive kinaesthetic feedback loop of ease, lightness, and pleasure. Therefore, the practitioner recognizes well-coordinated movement when its execution is easy (Feldenkrais 1980: 4). The purpose and function of learning in the Feldenkrais Method® arise organically and are revealed to the individual in the process of doing. The methods of transmittance help the practitioners to 'find out' themselves, rather than being told exactly what to do, or to imitate the movement shapes through the facilitator's demonstration (Coogan 2016). In this way this method refrains from explicitly determining what the learning might be and how it might be physically expressed. Attending to intentions with an experimental attitude, rather than to the achievement of a goal, helps one to recognize and to accept that learning takes place from where one is in the present, not from where one wishes to be (Sheets-Johnstone 1979). Its methods proceed along indirect pathways of learning and make evident that the disruption of known patterns and acceptance of liminal states of uncertainty are indeed strategies that can spawn creativity, transformation, and growth (Coogan 2016). Powers of sensory and proprioceptive discrimination can be sharpened by focusing on isolated motions in order to detect the slightest signals of change in bodily feeling. In doing so, attention can be directed to what one is actually doing and not to what one thinks one is doing. Thus, by separating intention from action, one can access one's self-logic more deeply,

that can help to clarify functional efficiency with the outward representation of intention (Feldenkrais 1972).

My role in this environment is that of steward or facilitator, one who sets parameters that encourage the dancers to be their own decision-making agents and to assume ownership of their own learning processes and questions. In this role, I must critically engage with ideas and perspectives in accordance with the lifeworlds of the *ArtRose* members in facilitating the co-creation of a collaborative learning environment that invites multiple channels of dialogue between all agents (Weems 2006, Lather 1994). The act of stewarding necessitates critical self-reflection to recognize that what 'is' in support of the curiosity, ease, efficiency, uncertainty and eventual satisfaction of the movers. Therefore, at times we all are invited to slow down the execution of movement in order to pay attention to the sensations and experiences that create space for body awareness and proprioceptive sensitivity. The slowing down facilitates a tangible oscillation between the action and the conscious reflection of the action, so that one 'learns to act while [one] thinks and to think while [one] acts' (Feldenkrais 1972: 60). Feldenkrais refers to this as 'reflection in action' (1981) or the simultaneity of thinking, sensing, feeling, and acting that is directed towards congruence between intention and action. I interpret Feldenkrais' idea of reflection-in-action in a non-reductionist manner; meaning, that action is not separate from thinking. I believe that he means that thought and action are united and that in reducing tempo and focusing attention we can attach to both the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of learning at the moment that the experience is taking place.

Engaging with the thought and the practical applications of the Feldenkrais Method® I aim to facilitate an environment of somatic affectivity and phenomenal awareness as this involves the relational world of self, other and community. The research is attentive to the moments in which a shared atmosphere of discovery, listening and initiative arises in which both a synchronization of action within the group, and the cultivation of a condition wherein everyone can transform the subjective impressions gained from internal sensory stimuli into objective representations in the external environment (Beringer 2010, Gallagher 2016). A primary aim as facilitator is to co-

create an atmosphere that can support the practitioners to realign and reorient in new relationships both within themselves and with others in which to welcome serendipity.

## **2.6 Modes of Enquiry**

A researcher chooses her research construct in partial accordance with her personal history. My personal history spans a forty-year professional career in dance as performer, choreographer, director of multiple ensembles, educator, certified practitioner of the Feldenkrais Method® and emerging dance scholar. Therefore, enculturated by training and experience, I possess the dual competency of knowing 'how' and knowing 'what' in the research field. This dual competency helps me to recognize, understand, analyse, interpret, and support the strata of knowledge present in this environment. In addition, my immersion in the research field makes the analytic reflection of this research in part autoethnographic, as the reflexivity implies the unavoidable intermingling of my observations as researcher and as participant that makes the authorial voice, in part, autobiographical. The field is affected through the researcher's involvement in it meaning that researcher subjectivity must be accounted for in the analytic processes. Personal experience is constructed from the interrelationship with the environment, and personal experience is understood as a way to know (Green 2011: 5). Therefore, this research is guided by principles that integrate the researcher's beliefs and values about the nature of reality in the research field. I strive to both observe and reflect analytically through methodological, theoretical, and philosophical lenses and to rely on the phenomenological knowledge the practice-as-research reveals. As all participants in the research field are invited to contribute, their histories and desires in the research field point us all in the direction of personal accountability and dialogue. Thus, the ontological assumptions of this research expressed in the artefact, 'Mut und Gnade' are value laden and morally committed.

As the research is embedded in subjective experiences, it is conducted through qualitative, interpretive, and emancipatory research methods (Denzin and Lincoln



2000: 27). Methods and strategies of qualitative research are multifarious and accommodate subjective experience of how knowledge comes to be known and the strategies of how, in this case 'tacit' knowledge, is invited into the world (Robson 2011, Guba 1990a: 26). The fact that all research is conducted by persons or subjects whose beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood impact upon that what is studied makes all research at least in part interpretative (Adams, Jones and Ellis 2015, McNiff and Whitehead 2005: 26). The investigations of my research are intended to understand the essence(s) of experience in the research field so that I can serve as an agent of understanding and change for all participants in this learning environment.

Grounded in constructivist and postpositivist paradigms this thesis unites a variety of disciplines including Somatics, social theory, and philosophy as it looks to the subjective creation of reality and truth. A postpositivist enquiry is one that privileges interpretation, understanding, and critique as the goals of research versus verification and prediction (Lather 1994). This concerns the way one justifies one's claim to knowledge congruent with a particular setting rather than arriving at generalizations (Green and Stinson 1999: 99, Lather 1994). Constructivism focuses on the transferability and dependability of that which arises in the research field rather than on proving a hypothesis through its objective verifiability (Green and Stinson 1999: 92-94, Guba 1990). From this perspective, postpositivist and constructivist research paradigms can be seen as complementary as their focus lies with the individual in a social setting (Weems 2002, Green and Stinson 1999: 92-93). Socio-constructivism emphasizes the collective generation and transmission of meanings between people, as they form their relationships with the world; (Long 2002: 14) thereby, acknowledging the sociocultural aspects of subjective experiences that construct identities and the existence of multiple realities in personal meaning-making (Sheets-Johnstone 2015, Robson 2011). This assumption is echoed in social psychologist Kenneth Gergen's reflection:

The terms and forms by which we achieve understanding of the world and ourselves as social artefacts, are products of historically and culturally situated

interchanges among people. The degree to which a given account of the world or self is sustained across time is not dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the vicissitudes of social processes (1994: 49-50).

The Somatic position understands the human being to be a non-permanent body-self, which is formed and transformed through the context of one's own life (Feldenkrais 1984). Both self-perception and social processes of exchange are for the development of knowledge essential (Schutz 1962: 59), as meanings are constructed and understood contextually as a result of social participation.

### **2.6.1 Philosophical Phenomenology**

Phenomenologists have elaborated (the) original, pristine body, (the) pre-objective or pre-objectified body. They call it the lived body (Sheets-Johnstone 1984: 123).

The act of dancing is experiential. The experience is in one's body. Thus, the body is the primary source of knowing, both individually and collectively. This fact makes dance inherently an embodied phenomenological experience. Philosophical phenomenology is the perspective that bridges the epistemic, ontological, and methodological investigations of this research. This perspective investigates *lived body* experiences in which the subject is the object of one's experiences, observations, and reflections on these experiences. The objective of this perspective is to encounter the experience devoid of any prior theoretical or objectivating processing of it, as the *lived body* of each dancer is different.

This method of adopting this eidetic analysis is invariably associated with philosopher Edmund Husserl who argued that a phenomenon is how a person's, or a group of people's, experiences is transformed into consciousness (Sheets-Johnstone 1994: 137). For Husserl, whatever presents itself to consciousness is a phenomenon. Therefore, he said that one looks 'to the thing itself', (*zu den Sachen selbst*) (Wehrle and Doyon 2017:2). The purposive and sentient body is understood as the organizing core of experience (Olsen and McHose 2014) both individually and in the inter-relational

somatically informed improvisational dance practice and performance that underlies this research. This is the 'thing' itself.

Heuristic inquiry epitomizes the phenomenological emphasis on meanings and knowing through personal experience and legitimizes and prioritizes the personal experiences, insights, and reflections of the researcher (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 109). It emphasizes connectedness and relationships that lead to 'depictions of essential meanings and portrayal of the intrigue and personal significance that imbue the search to know' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 108). Both philosophical phenomenology and heuristic inquiry invite me to better understand the essence of the phenomenon through shared reflection with the members of the *ArtRose* community (Douglas and Moustakas 1985), for example at the close of our weekly dance sessions. Heuristics concludes with a creative synthesis that includes the researcher's intuition and tacit understandings, and the essences of the persons in experience (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 43).

Sheets-Johnstone describes phenomenology as not merely an individual account of experience but a grasping of the essential nature of the experience, 'in the experiencing subject for whom there is always a world' (1984: 130). 'Educationalist Michael Patton argues that housed in phenomenological enquiry is the 'assumption that there is an essence or essences to shared experiences' (1990: 70-71). Therefore, the only way for one to know what another person experiences, is to experience the phenomenon as directly as possible for oneself (van Manen 1990:10). To understand and to interpret the essence(s) of shared experiences in the ensemble, *ArtRose*, I became a fully participating member<sup>17</sup>. I entered the research field in 2011 without preconceived hypotheses of what to expect or of what the outcomes should be, as I had never before worked with 60+ aged dancers, trained or untrained. I did, however, begin with decades of experience as a dance professional carried in my *lived body*. Therefore, throughout this research process, I strove both to recognize both the

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<sup>17</sup> It is to note, that during the first two years of the *ArtRose* ensemble (prior to the beginning of the PhD research) my role was that of facilitator and director, not one taking part in the performative practices of the ensemble. Beginning in 2013, I began performing with the ensemble and therefore became a fully participating member of this community.

essences of the experiences and to weigh and balance them in relation to my preconceptions and prejudgments, due to my former experiences. In phenomenological and heuristic inquiries, presuppositions are not removed from actual experiences but are bracketed in respect to be reflected-upon (Sheets-Johnstone 1984: 138) as these presuppositions can become encrusted onto the present experiences. This means that one must become more aware of individual bias, in order to inhibit a predominant role of the familiar to surface. The researcher is asked to perceive that what is usually familiar as strange in the sense of being original or untainted (Sheets-Johnstone 1984). The reflection on the experience is as necessary as the experience itself as through reflection one's own presuppositions surface. Reflecting upon the experiences, unfettered by preconceptions and prejudgments, one can discover with wonder how an experience unfolds. Borrowing from Donald Schon's concept of reflection-on-action (1983) and John Dewey's reflective thinking (1933) requires shuttling back and forth from observations to examination and reflection on those observations, and then acting on those conclusions. This self-reflective process lends validation to the investigation. In this sense, validation is appreciated as a way of checking rather than a way to generalize or measure (Green and Stinson 1999: 98).

My work as researcher is to listen acutely in the research field, to be present with the experience and to reflect on its resonance, both as participant and as member of the ensemble. I strive to be available to both the movement of the dance whilst being open to experience the life of the dance itself, attentive to its inherent dynamics and expression. Within a phenomenological framework the body-being-in-the-world is understood as the basis for all perceptual experience — framed in the dance and used in its intentionality. Sheets-Johnstone proposes that as a dancer 'you are not simply moving through a form, but the form is moving through you... 'it', in a sense, is doing you' (1984: 127). The foundational question of phenomenology therefore asks what the meaning, structure, and essence of the individual or collective experience may be and how the action can be described and explained. A part of my research is to question, discover and to interpret the essence(s) in our shared experience, how the dance is moving through us, and what, why and how our dancing together depends

formatively and constitutively on the dynamic coupling of self and other in empathy (Thompson 2005: 263). It is the quality of relation between the members of the ensemble, *ArtRose*, that elucidates the nature, meaning and essence of our 'community in dance'.

In addressing these questions, it was necessary for me to adopt a philosophical, phenomenological, and heuristic perspective as it served to guide me to a better understanding of the tacit knowledge etched in all crevices and spaces of the *ArtRose* members, including myself, as precedence is given to the pre-objectified, preconscious body. These experiences create the *lived bodies* that make us who we are. However, this research is not primarily a phenomenological study, and it is not one of a process of in-depth interviewing and their analysis. My research methodology is principally located with Participant Action Research and in practice-as-research – in the action itself – as the practice and performance is the springboard for the creation of new knowledge.

## **2.7 The Methodological Imperatives**

### **2.7.1 practice-as-research and Participant Action Research**

The contextualization and clarification of the research field were necessary precursors for understanding the creative processes that constitute this thesis' methodology. The tapestry of this thesis weaves a variety of interdisciplinary concepts, theories and methods that include Somatics and phenomenology. Discussions on these topics were illuminated in previous sections of this chapter.

The research methodology of this thesis is two-fold. The necessity for a dual methodological imperative is a result of the multifarious trajectories of the research questions put forth in this thesis. Questions investigate the potential for the generation of new knowledge through a somatically informed process of collaborative practice with older adults that includes the creation and performances of original dance works. In addition, this thesis investigates the socio-cultural dimensions for the forming and sustaining of a 'community in dance', and the cultural significance for

groups of older adult amateur dance ensembles in the German cultural landscape. Thus, both the methodologies of practice-as-research and Participant Action Research are essential for this thesis as both the dance making, and performance and the researcher's full participation are integral parts of the research methods themselves (Kershaw 2009).

Addressing the sociocultural questions of this thesis requires a focus on Participant Action Research in which a social purpose underlies its methods as its assumptions are based in social praxis (Denzin and Lincoln 2013). A fundamental methodological assumption of Participatory Action Research is that the research is done by the practitioner herself, not by a researcher investigating the practice of others (Guba 1990a: 18). Of equal significance is the fact that as a practitioner-researcher I have been conducting research on myself— in relation — to the others in this field to explore how this scrutiny and reflection might impact upon my own practice and ethical being in the world. This is the heuristic and autoethnographic contribution to this thesis that is interwoven through its chapters. The somatically embodied dance practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble is an experience of living, sentient, sense-making intersubjectivity and ethical engagement.

### **2.7.2 practice-as-research**

More than two decades ago, practice-as-research in performance entered the academy in regions as the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa, and Scandinavia, triggering 'fundamental and radical challenges to well established paradigms of knowledge making, inside the academy and beyond' (Nelson 2011, Haseman 2010, Kershaw 2009). Its fundamental tenet puts forth artistic practice, the 'knowing how' as a valid source of knowledge creation and posed the question: 'What knowledge inheres within the practice itself?' (Spatz 2010: 50). Prior to the emergence of practice-as-research in academia the questions addressing the bifurcations between artistic practice and scholarly knowledge asked how artistic practice can produce scholarly knowledge or inversely, how scholarly knowledge informs artistic practice

(Spatz 2010: 49). Practice-as-research seeks to deconstruct this binary, as 'the creative artefact is considered the embodiment of new knowledge. Emphasis is placed on creative exploration and innovation in the given artistic practice' (Sullivan 2009: 48). As practice-as-research studies both the processes and products of artistic creation (Skains, 2018, Nelson, 2011, Trimmingham 2002), it proposes that the interpretative practice of making sense out of critically reflected experience is a creative practice in its own right (Gergen and Gergen 2003, Guba 1990a: 17). Practice-as-research prioritizes the practice as a place of knowledge generation, as the embodied experience of the research, in the case of this thesis, the weekly practice. It is subjective, emergent, and interdisciplinary and subject to repeated adjustment (Barrett 2010: 6).

The practice-as-research in this thesis seeks to capture the complexity of the social reality of the ensemble *ArtRose* both artistically and as a form of democratic egalitarian intersubjectivity that might lead to the sustainability of a 'community in dance' and to the enhanced visibility of amateur dance art in the older adult sector in Dresden and its environs. This practice is facilitated through the physical directives that I offer that aim to stimulate the psychomotor and affective responses through imaginative, biomechanical, sensorial, and self-questioning language cues and movement tasks that invite intersubjective body response. My role is to recognize that which becomes manifest in the dancing and to bring *Gestalt* to these ideas, desires, and themes. In this sense, the weekly dance practice and the dance making are inseparable. We do not practice in preparation for creating the dance. Practice and creation proceed hand in hand. Thus, the dance making emerges organically out of the dance practice. I investigate the truth of an interpretation in relation to my perception of the phenomenon or the experience studied. Practice-as-research is built upon the notion that knowledge generation is a collaborative process in which each participant's diverse experiences and skills are critical to the outcome of the work (McLeod 2010, Barrett 2010).

The making, performance, and reflection of the dance, *Mut und Gnade* (Courage and Grace), validates this practice-as-research and constitutes the practical submission of

my thesis. The process of creation and performance and post-performance critical reflection is articulated in Chapter 7.

### **2.7.3 Participant Action Research**

The methodology of Participant Action Research is based in a collaborative process in which all members of the research community partake fully in the project undertaken. 'Participant Action Research has a distinct focus on collaboration, political engagement, and an explicit commitment to social justice' (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 349). Thus, Participant Action Research is a methodology aiming to establish respectful relationships (Whitehead and McNiff 2005) in 'a shared process for growth whose self-transforming capacity can engender a sense and feeling of belonging' (Lewin, quoted in Trimmingham 2002: 56). The fact that all participants are involved in the research process makes it an emergent methodology, one that fundamentally aims towards change. Knowledge is negotiated, subjective and influenced by its relationality, as meanings are constructed, reflected upon and understood contextually as a result of social participation (Whitehead and McNiff 2005: 26). Sociologist Nigel Mellor states that this form of research is as much about the process of answering questions as it is about the questions themselves (1998: 462). It stems from the understanding that knowledge is plural, generated in collaboration so that each participant's lifeworld and skills contribute to the outcome of the processes and creations. Therefore, all members are invited to reflect upon, re-evaluate, deconstruct and reconstruct their own truths. Accordingly, everyone in the *ArtRose* community is encouraged to act as an agent who can effect change in the environment and whose achievements can be evaluated in terms of one's own values and objectives (Lincoln and Denzin 2003, Whitehead and McNiff 2005: 29).

Participant Action Research begins with the expression of an experience or a concern and develops through cycles of action and reflection, making it an inductive and improvisatory methodology (Wisker 2008). Educationalists Marion Dadds and Susan Hart speak of Participatory Action Research as a methodology of inventiveness, as it is



one that 'tries out' multiple ways until a path is found that is right (2001). Therefore, the process of an action-reflection cycle proceeds as: Observe, Reflect, Act, Evaluate, Modify (Giguere 2015, Robson 2011, Wisker 2008). This cycle of enquiry therefore enables the researcher-participant to embody the knowledge generated through the research process and to investigate, reflect upon, and evaluate the conceptual, philosophical, affective, and psychomotor responses that emerge through the work. Thus, the methods of Participant Action Research are responsive to changing circumstances and needs in the research environment (Dadds and Hart 2001, Denzin, and Lincoln 1994: 347). The pedagogical awareness that this mode of enquiry and experience can draw forth, invites the researcher to question her own traits and truths so that the researcher's reality did not permeate the shared atmosphere, but instead allows space for all realities to find expression and to prosper.

From the onset the reflection on the dynamics of power and privilege informing Participant Action Research as research is not value free and the epistemological assumption of Participant Action Research is that the objects of the enquiry are at once the subjects of the enquiry. Engaging as a participant-researcher means dealing with continual self-reflection about the responsibility for holding myself accountable for my own decisions whilst not trying implicitly or explicitly to influence other people's experiential learning or to view other members as sources of data, which would thus create an imbalance in power relationships (Lather 1994). Foremost, this means a deep commitment to an ethics of caring, clarity, and respect to all members so that any sense of misuse of trust will not be compromised. I have sought not to make the research environment a potential site of coercion in using intimate detail of individual responses in the thesis or prompting particular responses from members that would corroborate my observations. The ethics of Participant Action Research are guided by the belief that everyone participating in the research field is held accountable for their own actions and 'might be best conceived of as a system of community covenantal ethics framed by relationships of reciprocal responsibility, collaborative decision making and power sharing' (Brydon-Miller 2007). All participants are asked not to pass judgements on others without first making those judgements on

themselves. In other words, no one should expect others to do something that they are not willing to do themselves. Participant Action Research is a value-laden, morally committed practice.

The methodology is both interpretative, as it seeks to understand the impacts and meaning present and emerging in the *ArtRose* ensemble, and emancipatory as it aims for change and development in a manner that is empathetic, non-oppressive and accountable (Whitehead and McNiff 2005, Denzin and Lincoln 1994: 13). Theory generating is a way of building new knowledge '[that] involves identifying and defining concepts, integrating, and juxtaposing concepts to form statements with a view to presenting a unified, coherent and logical expression of a new idea or insight about some new dance phenomena' (Green and Stinson 1999: 66) that includes both implicit and explicit knowledge, knowing and doing, knowing how and knowing what. As the participant action of our weekly practice and the making and performing of dances follow similar creative and interactive processes, the two methodologies offer a symbiotic fit for this research: Participant Action Research supports the involvement of the researcher as practitioner, and practice-as-research supports both the processes of the practice and validates artistic creation and performance, as in the example of 'Mut und Gnade', as offering a contribution to new knowledge.

## **2.8 Procedures**

The procedures for the legitimatization and representation of my research are first and foremost the weekly practice and performance supported by the processes of embodied phenomenological reflectivity and reflection on the action itself. Critical analysis develops out of the experience. Dewey describes reflection as that which 'gives an individual an increased power of control' (1933: 21). He writes that reflection 'emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity. [...] It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action' (1933: 17). Reflection generates new learning from past experiences. Dewey's cycle of reflective thinking is divided into five parts: perplexity, elaboration, hypotheses, comparing

hypotheses, and taking action (Dewey 1933: 106-115).<sup>18</sup> Philosopher Donald Schön states that learning from experience requires shuttling back and forth between observations, examination and reflection on those observations, and then acting on those conclusions. The more people reflect on action, the better they get at reflecting and the more they can learn about themselves (Schön 1987, 1983). Reflections in the group at the end of the practice reveal the quality of the practice. Both Schön's and Dewey's method's reflective thinking enhances awareness of the primary topics that arise that might lead to a shift or change in the manners in which the research was conducted. Reflective thinking has proved effective in determining problems, concerns, and desires in the ensemble and for the confirmation of that which is satisfying.

Semi-structured interviews and text responses to questions that span a wide array of topics relevant to the *ArtRose* ensemble, performance videos, researcher notes, and comments from 'critical friends' and former members of the ensemble contribute to the data collection and are reviewed according to the method of comparative analysis based in the grounded theory method. Each member of the *ArtRose* community and participant observers consented to an ethics protocol that allows for their written texts, interview documentation and performance and rehearsal videos to be used as data for the research. The research protocol was taken through the University's ethics approval process. The consent forms, information sheets and questionnaire examples are included in Appendix 1. This inductive method of data analysis looks to adduce meaning and understanding in particular settings with particular populations. The aim is not to predict outcomes, concerns or issues that might arise; rather, it is to look out for emerging patterns that might arise in the specific situation (Robson 2008: 489, Glaser and Strauss 1967). This method emphasises that meanings are not made and read in isolation but rather constructed and understood contextually and as a result of social participation (Probert 2006: 5). The practice and performance of the *ArtRose* ensemble coupled with a comparative analysis of the data using a grounded theory

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<sup>18</sup> Dewey's cycle of reflective thinking is discussed in depth in Chapter 4.

approach and researcher self-reflection are the primary criteria used for the interpretation of this research. Chapter 7, the *ArtRose* community in dance, offers a thorough investigation of the methods of practice in the ensemble and an analysis of the data collected.

## 2.9 Conclusion

Belief in collaboration, and trust in democratic processes as leading to positive personal and community transformation are common principles of practice-as-research and Participant Action Research (Denzin and Lincoln 2000: 352). Dewey stresses the fact that for democracy to flourish there must be common interests developed among citizens and a commitment to reconsider our individual interests in the light of understanding the interests of others (Gutmann, 1987: 76-77).

A fundamental purpose for researching my practice with others is to explore how this practice enables the continuity of a community drawn together to practice a somatically informed improvisational practice in a cooperative and collaborative environment of distributed authority and shared responsibility. Therefore, the manner of being and working together in dance significantly impacts upon the creative artefacts that are created, produced, and performed. Therefore, the practical submission of this thesis, the work *Mut und Gnade* for 15 performers, is the tangible manifestation of a 'community in dance' on which this thesis revolves.

Over the course of this extended research period, layers of knowledge and understanding — empathy, social connective, artistic, and perceptual — have been transforming in the community in dance, *ArtRose*. The one is the microcosm of the individual, another is the interrelations among group members, and the third is the social and political import of the group's activities in the sociocultural climate of Dresden and its environs. The research methodology helps me to better understand and contribute to this multi-layered practice and performance.

The pedagogical awareness that the two methodologies of this thesis can bring forth invites one to question the person we are used to being, and the person we maybe could become. This carries with it a sense of self-responsibility for each participant to recognize that she is both the agent of her own learning and has the potential to influence the learning of all the others in the community. Thus, it is the researcher's role to generate theories of practice that are congruent with every participant's values in the research field. The extended time frame of the thesis research has offered me the space needed to investigate its research questions as they all revolve around developmental concerns. And change requires time. Working with the methodologies of practice-as-research and Participatory Action Research has allowed me to bring my practice into the research environment and has revealed to me the symbiosis of practice and research, as I practice my research and research my practice, that is one of tacit, embodied, and phenomenological experience supported by methodological, theoretical, and philosophical analysis.

Feldenkrais postulates that experience is changed depending on how one attends to it (1985). The primary ontological assumptions revolve around the premise that the researcher sees herself as trying to live in a manner that is consistent with her values. This may seem obvious, but without the necessary measure of reflection, the obvious can become either illusive or incongruent with how one actually deals with others. As a researcher it is of utmost importance for me to feel guided and carried by an ethical vantage of reciprocity, equality, responsibility, and acceptance whilst undergoing this research and living in the world with others. The following chapter speaks of community. It offers an historical excursion into the lay dance movement in Germany at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, dance culture in the German Democratic Republic, the idea of Community Dance in German, past and present and relates the rationale for what I propose as a 'community in dance'.

## Chapter 3

### Community, the *Laientanz* Movement in Germany, Amateur and Community Dance, a Community in Dance

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Picture 2 *ArtRose* practice

Photo: Schröter

#### 3.1 Community

Community defies a singular definition. However, it can be fundamentally understood as a situated social unit of people who share commonality, such as values, beliefs, activities, customs and/or identity (Wenger 1998). Identifying oneself with a community means having a sense of belonging. Social and psychological research over the course of the past century has demonstrated the basic human need for belonging (Maslow 1962, Baumeister and Leary 1995). A sense of belonging to a community has been shown to improve an individual's motivation, well-being, and contentment

(Amans 2013). Factors of social belonging are characterized as mutual understanding, individual validation, group identification, and the sharing of experience (Young 1986, Wenger 1998). Therefore, one can belong simultaneously to multiple communities that make up the conditions and situations of one's life: such as, family units, places of work, groups, clubs, or institutions that offer political, artistic, religious or leisure activities. Thus, practicing dance with others in diverse situations, such as in a dance studio, a club, a theatre, a ballroom, or a site-specific environment offers an experience of belonging in a community, be it fleeting or sustainable. In short, social connectivity creates a sense of community. Clearly questions arise as to the manners of commitment, participation, engagement, and responsibility that individuals assume as members of the communities with which they identify. In some instances, the ideal of community can be seen as one which rejects individualism and affirms collective belonging as social theorist Iris Young describes: 'Community proposals conceive the social subject as a relation of unity composed by identification and symmetry among individuals within a totality '(1986: 12). This definition resonates with the history of the national socialist ideology in the 1930s and the forty-year rule of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), in which the context of belonging in a community was not always predicated upon individual choice, but rather on fitting into a pre-existing ideology weighted with both positive and negative connotations.

This chapter offer insights into the '*Laientanz*' (sometimes translated as amateur dance) movement that emerged at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and outlines the two specifically German forms of dance of that time, *Ausdruckstanz* (expressionist dance) and *Tanztheater* (dance theatre). It continues by identifying the sphere of amateur dance in the GDR and discusses the evolution of Community Dance in the German context drawing parallels with the understanding of Community Dance in the UK. An accounting of my rationale for the use of the expression 'community in dance' to describe the *ArtRose* ensemble concludes this chapter.

### 3.1.1 The *Laientanz* Movement in Germany

The political situation of dance in Germany in the twentieth Century has been characterized by two phenomena: the *Laientanz* or mass movement of people dancing, and the emancipation of dance within the arts (Jeschke and Vettermann 2000)<sup>19</sup>. As a response to industrialisation towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and as a reflection on the sociocultural situation in the newly reorganized country of Germany (1871) the ideas of *Körperkultur* (body culture), *Lebensreform* (life reform) and *Jugendbewegung* (youth movement) emerged in the German socio-cultural context. These ideas proclaimed a new concept of the body, free movement, and the social relevance of dance/movement in the German culture. Dance scholars Claudia Jeschke and Gabi Vettermann describe these movements as:

a 'back to nature' ideal, young men and women of the bourgeoisie were searching, emotionally, if not ecstatically, for their roots, rejecting, in their eyes, the dehumanizing effects of industrialization and its resulting urbanization and alienation. The body, movement, and dance – terms that were often used interchangeably – functioned as metaphors and concrete ideas for this search for origins, as aids in helping people to reconnect with all that was alive, natural, and organic; on a rather poetic and self-referential, though not reflexive, level, body, movement, and dance became motifs and contexts for modern, young life at large (2000: 56).

All three interconnected ideas of corporeality regarded concern for the body as central for a healthy life in community with others. Therefore, this idea of the mass movement of dance had a focus on the individual's proprioceptive awareness of the body moving and its expressivity with others in the shared environment. Through the medium of dance, one was drawn into a community. This body culture idea of the *Laientanz* movement looked to a return to holistic gymnastics<sup>20</sup>, in which parallels to the burgeoning work in somatic practices cannot be overlooked (Gindler 1986). In this

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<sup>19</sup> After 1945 many of Germany's city and state theatres adopted the *Drei-Sparten Bühne* (a theatre with three Performing Arts divisions: Theatre, Music and Dance). Dance gained its sovereignty, no longer being relegated to a sub-division of the Theatre or Music divisions of the theatre.

<sup>20</sup> Early somatic practitioners as Else Gindler and holistic gymnastic teachers as Bess Mensendieck, Hedwig Kallmayer, Wolfgang Bode, all preceded by the work in music and dance by Jacques Dalcroze (in part at his school in Hellerau, Dresden). Holistic German Gymnastics was a somatic practice (Johnson 1995).



climate of 'life reform', one of the two forms of German identity in dance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century emerged, *Ausdruckstanz*, or the expression of the individual. *Ausdruckstanz* is not a clearly defined ideological, pedagogical, or technical system; rather, it is one in which the authenticity of the individual dancer-mover can be seen as the representation of the universalities considered or felt to be the essence of individual experience (Jescheke and Vettermann 2000). The corporal and emotional contexts of *Ausdruckstanz* are similar to those of the tenets of the American modern dance pioneers, as on both continents modern, expressionist dance was embedded in philosophical, metaphysical, and spiritual concerns (Martin 1972). The *Ausdruckstänzer* was concerned with the exploration of individual movement potential and the experience of corporeal consciousness. In the sense, the essence of an individual's being could perhaps lead to collective consciousness. Rudolf von Laban one of the most influential figures of dance in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, drew connection between dance and nature, life and leisure, work and play and believed that everyone who was able to experience nature could dance (Jeschke and Vetterman 2000). This idea led to his axiom, 'Everybody can be a dancer' (Müller and Stöckemann 1993). Inherent in this statement is the belief that dance is inclusive and is integral to connecting to cultural aesthetics and socio-cultural identity. As such, dance is an activity of shared practice in community as exemplified in Laban's 'movement choirs' in which large groups of people joined together in physical and spiritual dancing (Fernandes 2014). This quality of individual and social dance that explored both the autonomy and the transdisciplinary nature of body and movement harmonized conceptually with the mass culture that was popular and politically accepted in Germany in the 1930s. Therefore, one can argue that Laban's movement choirs of structurally organized scores of movement improvisation were indeed expressions of Community Dance, as communities of varying degrees of longevity formed through the medium of dancing together. In addition, participation was not predicated on a certain level of dance expertise. Laban called his form of dance, *Freie Tanz* or Free Dance (Jeschke and Vettermann 2000). Mary Wigman (1886-1973) and Gret Palucca (1902-1993), two

female icons of *Ausdruckstanz*, working with dance in the professional realm, described this quality of dance as *neue künstlerische Tanz* or New Artistic Dance.

The German *Ausdruckstanz* evolved into one that encouraged German idealism and loyalty (Mosse 1964), without the majority of the dancers becoming fully aware of it (Müller and Stöckemann 1993: 127). Thus, there is consensus that the early *Ausdruckstanz* that began with the 'life reform' movement at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century became politicized through the Nazi years and thereby transformed the idea of a *Tanzgemeinschaft* (dance community) to the fascist ideal of a *Volksgemeinschaft*. Dance scholar, Marion Kant describes *Volksgemeinschaft*, as one which in a slightly opaque manner speaks of the creation of a master 'Aryan' race of strength, power and unity (2004: 110). Hence, the word *Gemeinschaft* or community as in Community Dance was, until recently in Germany, an expression laden with the ideology of the darkest era of Germany's history, and was replaced with the word, amateur dance.

The second typically German form of dance that emerged in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was that of *Tanztheater*. As early as the 1930s at the *Folkwang Universität der Künste* in Essen-Werden<sup>21</sup>, dance artist and educator Kurt Jooss developed the basic idea of the *Tanztheater*, a hybrid dance form that joined ballet technique with modern dance trends to create a dance expression full of theatrical abstraction of the body and movement and critical of politics and the social condition<sup>22</sup>. This form blossomed in the 1970s through the work of its major protagonist, Pina Bausch with her company the *Tanztheater Wuppertal* operative at the German state theatre in Wuppertal. *Tanztheater* became the focal point of a reconciliation of life with art as it references the everyday experience of individual people in relation to a social psychology of corporeality (Servos 2008) in the form of a choreographic collage, a dialogue of movement and word (Fernandes 2014: 81). The subject material of *Tanztheater* in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) addressed the social conditions of society as those

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<sup>21</sup> The Folkwang University of the Arts remains a leading institution for the performing and visual arts in Germany today.

<sup>22</sup> A most significant piece of early *Tanztheater* is the 'Grüne Tisch' (Green Table) by Kurt Jooss (1932) about war and death.

laden with fragility and contradictions. *Tanztheater* in the GDR provided a realistic script to create, educate and entertain the working class<sup>23</sup> (Kollinger 1983: 8).

In the former West German states, multiple ensembles of older adults exist that engage performatively with the genre of *Tanztheater*, due to the influence of the *Tanztheater Wuppertal*, the democratic organisation of the Federal Republic of Germany and the fact that older amateurs were not excluded from the possibility to take part in dance practice and dance performance in post-World War II Germany. Ensembles for older amateur adults that source from the expressive and individualistic agenda put forth by the *Ausdruckstanz* are very uncommon in Germany, East or West, perhaps as they rely solely on the expressivity of the body without any theatrical narrative and the fact that the influence of *Tanztheater* replaced that of the *Ausdruckstanz* in post-World War II Germany.

### 3.1.2 Dance in the GDR

During the forty-year rule of the GDR the profession of dance was an elitist occupation. Youths were recruited beginning at the age of ten to begin with pre-professional training at one of the GDR's three dance academies in preparation for a professional career as primarily classical dancers in the country's city state and state theatres.<sup>24</sup> Ensembles of German and East European forms of folkloric dance were the non-professional or amateur expression for dance in the GDR, manifest in the national academies, and the federal associations of folklore dance that were socially and politically motivated to interpret the socialist doctrines put forth by the regime.

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<sup>23</sup> There were exceptions as the East German choreographies of Tom Schilling and Dietmar Seyffert offered in their balletic oriented *Tanztheater* works resistance to the doctrines of the regime through the theatrical device of *double entendre*. An exception in drama was East German Bertold Brecht was one of the leading innovators of 20<sup>th</sup> Century Theatre. Another exception was dramatist, Heiner Müller who was critically acclaimed in both East and West Germany.

<sup>24</sup> These academies were in Leipzig, Berlin and Dresden. The dance department in the academy (now Hochschule or University) in Leipzig has since closed. The *Staatliche Ballettschule Berlin* (State Ballet School and School of Artistry Berlin) and the *Palucca Hochschule für Tanz* (Palucca University of Dance Dresden) still exist and award BA Degrees in Dance Performance. In addition, the Palucca University offers MA Degrees in Dance Pedagogy and Choreography and a *Meisterklasse* Diploma.

Talented children, adolescents, and adults were recruited to join these highly selective folklore dance associations in which the dancers trained daily and engaged in frequent national and international competitions. As amateur dancers in the folklore ensembles were highly skilled, the word amateur only referred to the fact that members of these competition ensembles did not earn their livelihood through the profession of dance, but rather their participation was an elitist hobby activity.<sup>25</sup>

Both professional dancers and the (professional) amateur folklore dancers were highly regarded in society and enjoyed privileges from which ordinary citizens were excluded<sup>26</sup>. The folklore groups were influential in their respective cultural attitudes and aesthetics towards the socialism of amateur dance until the reunification of Germany in the beginning of the 1990s. At this point in history these east German Folklore ensembles lost their social and political justification as opportunities for dance as a leisure, artistic and physical activity, as 'amateur' became accessible to the greater community in the 'new' German states.

### **3.1.3 Amateur Dance and Community Dance in the New German States**

Private schools or cultural institutions for dance that were open for all did not exist in the GDR and therefore people did not have the opportunity to take dance classes simply for pleasure. However, ballroom dance, one embedded in the German cultural expression both East and West (Heles 2008) was the form of dance that was open to a wide range of the East German population. Ballroom dance was the dance of the proletariat. Many of the *ArtRose* members enjoyed dancing in Dresden's grand ballrooms during their youth and in their middle age.

Since the reunification of German in the 1990s dance schools, dance clubs, and dance offerings in cultural institutions have sprung up through the former East German

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<sup>25</sup> Children, adolescents, and adults were always given time off either from school, university or vocational training or their place of employment for training and participation in both national and international competitions (personal interview with Maud Butter (June 2020 and Verena Otto (November 2019)).

<sup>26</sup>Personal interview with former folklore champion, Maud Butter, June 2020 in Dresden at the Palucca University of Dance.

states. Often the term Community Dance and amateur dance are used interchangeably as a way that differentiates between professional and non-professional dancers. This distinction does not take into account the professionalism of the teacher, facilitator, or choreographers in the vocational/professional or amateur participant setting. To offer an example, at my place of work, the Palucca University of Dance Dresden, one of three options for a specialization in the Master of Arts program in Dance Education is, Community Dance, which has a focus on teaching children, adolescents, and adults in private dance schools in the techniques and styles of contemporary, classical, jazz dance and creative dance for children. Thus, the term Community Dance is equated with hobby dance in which people pay to take classes in amateur settings<sup>27</sup>. In the UK, the nature of Community Dance is both interpreted and practiced differently than the manner described above. By its definition in the Anglosphere, Community Dance offers a way for everybody and every body to dance. This philosophy intersects with the early German *Ausdruckstanz* that looks to the expressive potential of everyday movement (Kuppers 2017). In this context, Community Dance in its simplest terms describes dance in a community setting that British dance artist and educator Adam Benjamin describes as ‘a relatedness between strangers but for purposive, common action’ (2002: 100). Dance has been determined to be an effective method of community cultural development and health intervention (Amans 2008, Erber 2010, Kuppers 2017), and artists working in Community Dance describe the value of arts activity as one that contributes to personal development and gives benefits to society in the sense of bettering civil life (Pethybridge 2013: 75). Community Dance draws people together through a variety of dance activities to foster an aesthetic appreciation for

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<sup>27</sup> The dance industry, in terms of performing and teaching careers in dance is still heavily weighted on vocational dance education. Currently there are ten federally funded University Dance (Kunsthochschule or Art School) programs which all are very selective and tuition free. Six of the eight programs train in primarily in the contemporary/modern dance and classical idioms in preparation for professional performing careers. Four universities offer MA programs in either dance pedagogy or ‘Vermittlung’ (transmission); two universities offer MA programs in Choreography. Practice-led, practice-based and practice as research PhD degrees are not awarded in German universities. In addition, there are many private schools that offer 3- year programs in dance performance/pedagogy in which the students receive diplomas upon successful completion of the programs. Several cultural institutions offer certificate programs for qualification in a number of different areas that are geared to working with people in an array of cultural institutions and organizations. It is to note, that undergraduate degrees in dance are not awarded in full universities, but only in Kunsthochschule, or Art School programs.

the arts, social inclusiveness, and a sense of empowerment. Community or participatory dance is typically collaborative and is often one that aligns the skills of the facilitating dance artist with the creative energies of underrepresented groups in the struggle for cultural self-determination (Hawkins 1993) in a manner that may challenge conventional performance aesthetics (Kuppers and Robertson 2007).

In the UK, as in other countries in the Anglosphere, Community Dance has been contributing to the socio-cultural landscape for the past fifty years. Over the decades it has become a highly professionalized sector of the dance industry with an intricate network of funding partners and support <sup>28</sup>. In addition, many universities of higher education in the UK offer modules in the study in Community Dance within degree programmes that focus on dance. The umbrella organization, 'People Dancing' formally 'Foundation for Community Dance' with its plethora of activities is a prime example of the impact that Community Dance has made in the UK. In Germany, Community Dance organizations and projects aligned with the Anglo-Saxon model are slowly becoming more visible in the cultural landscape. The term Community Dance has lost its association with the National Socialist era and has entered the vernacular in the German dance environment. In Germany, Community Dance projects are mostly directed to youths<sup>29</sup> in different school situations with the intention to access their learning potential, social competence, self-worth, and agency. Founded in 2007 the *Bundesverband Tanz in Bildung und Gesellschaft e.V.* (Federal Umbrella Organization for Dance in Education and Society) is one of the organisations that has been responsible for bringing dance into educational and cultural institutions, working

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<sup>28</sup> Community Dance organizations have been receiving funding in the UK since 1977. The site: [www.communitydance.org.uk](http://www.communitydance.org.uk) is a useful and varied source for learning about the diversity of Community Dance in the UK.

<sup>29</sup> These community dance projects are generously supported through the program, 'Chance Dance'.

primarily with youths.<sup>30, 31</sup> This organization expanded in May of 2019 to include all sectors of society and is now called, *Dachverband Tanz- Tanz in Schulen/Aktion Tanz* (Umbrella Organization-Dance in Schools: Action Dance). This is the largest organisation for participatory dance in the country. Several of Germany's cultural institutions, such as the *Akademie Remscheid* in the state of North-Rhine Westphalia, now offer training programs in Community Dance along the lines of the British model. Many of the Community Dance projects and incentives undertaken through the program and funding incentives of *Aktion Tanz* are located in the former western states of Germany as this part of Germany has a longer tradition of making different genres of dance available to their citizens than their eastern neighbours.

### 3.1.4 Dance with Older Adults

There exists a myriad of opportunities for older amateur adults to dance in Germany. Many churches, cultural, educational, and senior centres offer dance practice such as tea dances, line dancing, social dancing, and chair dance courses for interested seniors. Increasingly, private dance schools and state funded theatres offer special courses for older amateur adults<sup>32</sup>, primarily geared to health and well-being. However, there are

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<sup>30</sup> The *Dachverband Tanz Deutschland - Ständige Konferenz Tanz* has been working as a nationwide platform for artistic dance in Germany since 2007. It was founded out of the awareness that the dance community must speak with one voice in the political landscape of the Federal Republic of Germany, the *Dachverband Tanz* today functions as an association of the outstanding, professional associations and institutions for artistic dance in Germany - spanning aesthetic differences, different modes of production and specific professional fields in dance. However, it must be recognized that amateur older dance ensembles (not affiliated with renowned companies and state theatres) have been excluded from both the funding and recognition of this federal organisation. The Federal Ministry for education and Research (BMBF) together with *Aktion Tanz* hosted a conference in Social Choreography in Essen at the *Pact Zollverein* in January 2020. This was the first one of its kind on this scale in Germany that included the sector of dance and ageing.

<sup>31</sup> British dance artist Royston Maldoon was instrumental in initiating discussions about the importance of dance and music in the development of young people in Germany particularly through his 2004 work, 'Rhythm is it', produced in collaboration with the Berliner Philharmonic Orchestra. This was the first educational project of music and dance of its kind in Germany.

<sup>32</sup> In the former West Germany states amateur theatre and *Tanztheater* ensembles have carved out a presence as the precedent for amateur dance with seniors has a longer history in that part of the country. In contrast the city of Dresden with its 500,000 inhabitants offers only three possibilities for contemporary dance classes geared specifically for older adult amateurs. *ArtRose* is one of these options.

very few ensembles of older adults that create and perform works of dance art. In the contemporary cultural landscape in Germany, dance is characterised by the idea of youthfulness, fitness and an ideal of beauty, which does not seem to have much in common with the often-negative image of 'age(s)'. On the one hand, dance generally excludes age, on the other hand, the demographic change makes age and ageing omnipresent, and this fact reinforces the imperative to consider and act upon dance and dance art in its relation to the aging population. Dance artist and scholar Nanako Nakajima proposes that:

Dance in a Euro-American context differs from other art forms because youth, physical power, and stamina constitute the art of dance. Because old dancers retire from dance, the pool of visible dancers embodies the youth orientation of the normative image of culturally idealized representations. Discussing ageing in dance becomes a provocative act in Euro-American dance culture (2017: 18).

The value of ageing in dance is recognized in the German cultural landscape particularly if the aging body aligns with the German aesthetic normative. This means that a person embodying the nominal dance styles and forms of youth as represented in a professional career can increasingly find a place in the German dance scene. Thus, there is a tendency for dance artists, particularly in the contemporary dance idiom, to extend their performing careers beyond the age of 40. An example is the company, *Dance On* an ensemble composed of a small group of 40+ internationally recognized dance artists<sup>33</sup>. This ensemble represents an exquisite group of mature dancers that address the value of age in professional dance<sup>34</sup>.

Despite the demographic change towards an ageing society and the recognition of brain plasticity that allows for life-long learning, the understanding for and integration

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<sup>33</sup> This ensemble was founded in 2015 by the initiative DIEHL-RITTER. It is now funded by The Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media as well as by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union as part of DANCE ON, PASS ON, DREAM ON.

<sup>34</sup> Often aging professional ballet dancer's transition into character roles or transition to backstage departments in the theatre, as costume, prompting. Increasingly retiring performing dance artists enrol for MA programs in Dance Pedagogy, as offered at the Palucca University of Dance, the Akademie des Tanzes at the University of Applied Arts Mannheim, and at the Frankfurt University of Music and Performing Arts (CoDE). As no first degree is mandatory as the requirement is fulfilled through a professional career in dance. These programs offer dancers, without first degrees, the possibility for education as dance pedagogues completed with a MA degree.



of older, amateur, uniquely ordinary dancing people into the concert stage in the German culture landscape proves challenging and not always welcome. To date, the specific physicality of an elderly person that contains the aesthetic of a lifetime of lived experience has not been adequately explored in German cultural and aesthetic education. This is where the work of the 'Federal Initiative Dance Art and Aging', of which *ArtRose* is a founding member, comes in. Founded in May 2016, this initiative is an association of dance makers, producers and networkers who are dedicated to researching and making dance art with older amateur adults a more integral part of dance and cultural education. Therefore, the work of the initiative focuses on research into issues of age(s) in contemporary dance in a way that traditional images of ageing can be re-evaluated that allow for new images to emerge and resonate in community. To date this initiative, consist of 20 ensembles and individuals and is a member of *Aktion Tanz – Bundesverband Tanz in Bildung und Gesellschaft*.

### **3.1.5 Community in Dance, the *ArtRose Ensemble***

The artistic practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble finds its roots in *Ausdruckstanz*, a form of dance that believes all bodies can be expressive and that this expression is something worth attending to. Throughout the research period of this doctoral thesis, it has become apparent to me that its entire tenor, that includes the research questions, fundamentally investigates, and reflects upon the conditions that support the transformability, sustainability, and expressivity of the community in dance, *ArtRose*. Martin Buber's philosophy of relation provides ethical guidance; social theories endow support in relation to community building, and the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic learning is what connects the social, educational, spiritual, and artistic components of this thesis.

The *ArtRose* ensemble is not a project-based community; rather, it is one that has been growing organically for the past nine- and one-half years, without a specific mission statement for continuity. Continuity has simply happened due to the members' undeclared commitment for a manner of dancing together and creating and

performing dances that embody poetic narratives and images of individual artistry and expressivity through a Feldenkrais-infused improvised relational dance practice.

Phenomenologist Shaun Gallagher describes this quality of interaction as kinaesthetic intercorporeity, a phenomenon that joins physical and intersubjective space in a way that can regulate and align one's own sensory and kinaesthetic perceptions with others; thereby, perhaps leading to a synchronizing of individual intentions and actions in the creatively constructed and shared environment (2016: 6). This is precisely the quality of being and dancing together, that endows the *ArtRose* community in dance with its singularity and identity regardless of fluctuation in membership.

Community Dance projects often operate within frameworks of socio-cultural policy and organizations that implement imperatives and incentives submitted by individuals or groups. The *ArtRose* community in dance operates independently of any cultural, social or financial organization. The ensemble is completely independent of patronage from an outside source, be it a cultural centre, or a funding organization. Thus, we are self-governing, meaning that we are accountable to no one other than ourselves. This fact precludes a deeply ethical consciousness for all *ArtRose* members as cooperation, collaboration and the sharing of responsibility are the factors that sustain the *ArtRose* community in dance. When one belongs to this 'community in dance', one does not only participate in the weekly dancing sessions, but also contributes to the development of a voice and a place for dance art with older non-trained dancers in the cultural landscape in Dresden. Participation in the *ArtRose* ensemble means advocacy for the validation and visibility of dance art with older amateurs in the greater community. *ArtRose* members participate in community events at cultural centres such as the *Festspielhaus Hellerau*, *European Centre of the Arts* attend and participate in lectures and symposiums on dance and culture. Many members of the ensemble took part in the *TanzKongress* (Dance Congress) in Dresden 2019; others are active members in the *Villa Wigman für Tanz* association, and the majority of the *ArtRose* members attend many dance and theatre performances in different venues. The weekly dance practice, dancemaking and dance performances has generated interest in the ensemble's members both to learn more about and participate in a wide variety

of dance genres. In Chapter 4 the practice of *ArtRose* will be contextualized regarding socio-political theories of 'communities of practice'.

Typically, community dance projects are facilitated by dance professionals both teachers and artists who work collaboratively with the participants often assuming the role of facilitator and fellow participant. Many dance artists have expressed the nature of working collaboratively with the community members, and the empowerment and joy of creating and embodying one's own movement and developing one's individual expressive signature through the medium of dance (Lee 2004, Macfarlane 2007, Pethybridge 2013). Nevertheless, the facilitator, director or choreographer ignites the collaborative process from her own artistic vision for the work, offering the dancers images, identifying the theme, and creating a structure or score. Dance artist Rosemary Lee describes her creative process as 'If I am making a work then I am trying to find ways of enabling the dancers to inhabit the piece that I envisage without losing their Identity or being dis-empowered in any way' (2004: 24). In the *ArtRose* community, making dances proceeds collaboratively from its inception to its performance. I offer neither the theme, nor the structure; rather, the work grows organically out of the weekly practice and it forms itself through member's input and reflection over time. Once the theme, the character, and the structure of the work become evident, my responsibility is to clarify the dramaturgy and offer support to the dancers in their artistic expression. The *ArtRose* community in dance is committed to collective authorship for all the parts of a production. A dance may take more than a year to create before it is performed. This fact means that long term commitment is required from the members of this ensemble.

Instability is often defined as a characteristic of Community Dance projects. This may be for reasons that include varying degrees of member commitment and participation, the often-temporal nature of projects meaning that communities form for a specific project and dismantle upon its completion, and the fact that predominately the artistic and organizational decision making and taking lay in the hands of a professional dance artist or project team. The stability and continuity of the *ArtRose* community in dance

ensemble is guaranteed through the sharing and division of responsibilities of all members for its continuity.

It is the way of being and dancing together that informs the dance and not that the dance informs or creates the community. The manner of relational dance coupled with the sharing of artistic and organizational responsibilities in the creative processes of the ensemble endow the *ArtRose* community with its continuity and stability.

Therefore, I choose to call the ensemble a 'community in dance' rather than a Community Dance project, as the community grows and transforms over extended periods of time through the way we share the dance together. The following chapter looks to the theoretical underpinnings of community and communities in practice. The socio-political positions put forth in this thesis are those of John Dewey, Étienne Wenger and Jean Lave and Hannah Arendt.

## Chapter 4

### Social Theory

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Picture 3 *ArtRose* practice

Photo: Schröter

#### 4.1 Introduction

The thesis explores the artistic, socio-cultural, and political ramifications of the *ArtRose* ensemble, a 'community in dance' of older, non-trained dancers drawn together to explore somatically informed contemporary and improvisational dance and performance. During the six-year research period the ensemble collectively created and performed five dance works. The most recent dance, '*Mut und Gnade*' constituted the practical submission of this thesis. Fundamentally this work is a manifestation of a quality of interaction, presence and sharing that puts forth a quality of deep connectivity. This work is neither the vision nor making of a single choreographer but

unfolds in the moment of the shared dance. Therefore, the quality of the work centres on individual embodied presence in a deep connectivity with the others.

Compositionally the work is built on a horizontal distribution of roles, in which no dancer is featured. Fundamentally this dance reflects how this community in dance practices together, governs together, created together, and performs together.

Therefore, the theoretical foundations of this thesis must be based in experiential learning, horizontal constructions of authority and power, engaged socio-political activism as well as offering pragmatic strategies for the building and sustaining of communities. As such this chapter addresses the research questions that point to the extent to which the socio-ethical relations impact upon the individual and group processes and condition the self-sustainability of the *ArtRose* community. In addition, it probes the socio-political ramifications of collaborative practice and performance of dance art with non-trained older dancing people in the mainstream of Germany's cultural landscape.

The socio-political theories that provide the theoretical foundation for this research harvest from the ideas of 20<sup>th</sup>- century seminal theorists John Dewey (1859-1952), Étienne Wenger (1952-), Jean Lave (1939-) and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). Their viewpoints deal with learning, growth, and emancipation through ethical, reciprocal and committed community engagement. Both Dewey and Arendt speak of the 'cooperative interaction' and note that community is both the means and the end of individual self-realization' (Honneth 2014: 269). This point underlies the proceduralism and communicative processes of the *ArtRose* ensemble. Dewey's social philosophy or naturalistic inquiry of learning in a democratic and reflective environment ([1916] 2008) demonstrates that action connected to personal interest is the vehicle for the advancement of knowledge and reflective thought. Wenger's (1952-) and Lave's (1939-) theory of 'Communities of Practice' (1998) offers a scaffolding for addressing how people organize, associate, and share practice as well as proving a method for the integration of new members into an existing ensemble. Arendt's call for communicative action (1958) is one that mobilizes individual and collective powers of

agency for political efficacy. These three unique yet interconnected perspectives underscore the complexity of the *ArtRose* community in dance.

The concepts of facilitation and experiential learning, two pivotal ideas underlying this thesis, are often attributed to Dewey (Hogan 2002). The social theory and philosophy that he put forth at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have not lost their relevancy and continue to offer inspiration for enquiries into the interface of practice and research in today's world. Contemporary theorists, such as Jürgen Habermas source from Dewey's propositions (Dotts 2016: 111-113, Honneth 2009: 22). I choose to source from an original line of thought for this thesis rather than from their contemporary interpretations. However, throughout this chapter similar, viewpoints of contemporary scholars that reflect Dewey's propositions are referenced.

## **4.2 Cooperative Social Enquiry or Cultural Naturalism**

Educational theorist John Dewey expresses a deeply naturalistic and social philosophy based in the conviction of the inseparability of democracy and education. He views democratic education as a place of organized freedom. For Dewey, education is equivalent to community and therefore a manifestation of the lifeworlds of the people in their respective communities. His philosophy presents a comprehensive and consistent outlook on how human beings might most effectively engage with the contingencies of learning, living and working together. Living and learning in the world, for Dewey, are dependent upon the *qualitative* participation of the individual in the social consciousness, as aware individuals form the nucleus of a democratic society (Dewey 1897).

Dewey was a major protagonist in the reform pedagogy movement in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Essentially, the idea of pedagogical reform placed the *lived* experience of the individual at the centre of learning. Experimental learning, or learning by doing, emerged (Kolb 1984: 5). Dewey's hypothesis, 'Experience includes the process by which it directs itself in its own betterment' (Dewey 1938:26), rejects ontological distinctions between the empirical and normative realms. In *Qualitative Thought*, he posits: 'There is nothing other than experience for learning, nor need

there be, for experience is ever growing, ever evolving, ever developing new meanings, new interrelationships and interconnections' (1920: 95). Knowledge claims become experimental, the result of which makes them revisable in the context of experience. The process of learning is thereby constantly enriched and always unfinished (Filson 1992: 76). Dewey's advocacy for adult *lifelong* learning rings out loud and clear; thus, his proposals provide a most appropriate theoretical foundation for this thesis.

Theory and practice are deeply entangled forms of activity. He states: There is no such thing as educational value in the abstract (Dewey 1938: 46) and defines enquiry as a process in which practical and theoretical knowledge emerge ([1916] 2008). Theory is understood as an aspect of the socially shaped practical activity of the agents or as an empirical experiential attitude towards knowledge (Filson 1992: 20-21). Dewey insists on the 'impossibility of separating either the theoretical discussion of the course of study, or the problem of its practical efficiency from intellectual and social conditions' (Dewey as quoted in Frega 2016:100). Echoing Dewey, feminist scholar Donna Haraway proposes: 'Theory is bodily, and theory is literal [...]. Reflective artefactualism produces effects of connection, of embodiment and of responsibility' (1992: 295-299).

Dewey championed a perspective that considered pedagogical leadership as a form of distributed responsibility among all people in the teaching and learning environment. Dewey scholar Eric MacGilvray<sup>35</sup> concludes that Dewey's introduction of responsibility for each member of the social learning community renders his experiential learning egalitarian in the sense that everyone may be thought capable of developing and profiting from their individual faculty more fully (2004: 24-26). Dewey's expressed epistemology and ontology are deeply somatic, without being explicitly identified as such.

His empirical and experiential attitude towards knowledge replaces 'knowing' with 'thinking' and 'reflecting' with 'enquiring'. He proposes that 'knowing' plays into Cartesian dualism by separating declarative knowledge and the physical, moral and

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<sup>35</sup> This chapter includes not only primary sources from the works of John Dewey, but also copious secondary sources. Combining primary and secondary sources allows me to test my own interpretations of Dewey's social philosophy.



cultural experiential knowledge (Filson 1992:73). For Dewey, the processes of judgement and deliberation lead to knowledge, and as such, knowing becomes a moral way of action. Therefore, the quality of knowledge should be sufficient to enrich social meaning and relationships such that both solidarity in the social unit and individual personality mature in a manner in which all can be successfully involved and can profit (Filson 1992:35, Kolb 1984: 8). One can conclude that the efficacies of one's actions determine the person's practical wisdom (Rogers 2007: 94).

Dewey's work in education underpins the relationship between experience, learning and reflection (Sevens and Cooper 2009). He defined which experiences he believes to be educative, how learning proceeds, and what role reflection plays in learning (Stevens and Cooper 2009). Dewey's social philosophy, embedded in both the constructivist and humanistic traditions, proposes that one's reality is synonymous with one's experience; therefore, learning proceeds as a natural phenomenon from the individual's engagement with the world, as a spiral-like form of re-adaptation to one's environment (Dewey 1938). In this cyclical process the observation of one's present actions, infused with the knowledge of those that are past, endows learning with meaningful purpose. Dewey states that 'the central problem of an education based upon experience is to serve the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully and creatively in subsequent experiences' (1938: 27-28). Perception, action and inquiry in Dewey's philosophy become 'conscious only when meanings enter [them] that are derived from prior experiences' (Rogers 2007: 107). Thus, education is based in moral and ethical experiences and interaction. In this sense, learning should be appraised through the perspective of its contribution to the ethical functioning of society.

Dewey posits that it is the *quality* of the experience that makes it educative and endows it with meaning. He identifies two criteria as essential for determining the quality and ensuing meaning and interpretation of the experience. These are the principles of continuity and interaction ([1916] 2008). Dewey states: 'The two principles of continuity and interaction are not separate from each other. They intercept and unite. They are, so to speak, the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience' ([1938] 1977: 44).

The principle of interaction, or the interplay between the internal and external worlds of people's experiences suggest, that learning is essentially a social process, one necessary for interpreting the power and function of experience. Interaction precludes that social practices are essentially, interpenetrating, and mutually influencing. Continuity or experiential continuum denotes the recognition that every experience is a continuous flow of knowledge carried from the past. Continuity between action and production is the origin of knowledge. Thus, learning processes are cyclical and inductive. As such, learning for its future applications has to be considered at every stage of the learning process (Dewey [1938] 1977: 27-28). As one grows and the world of experience expands, the learning material found in experience must develop as well. Dewey's concept of learning resembles that of educationalist, Benjamin Bloom who proposes a taxonomy of teaching and learning made up of lower-and-higher order thinking skills. The lower-order thinking skills are impulse, remembering, understanding, and applying; the higher-order thinking skills are reflection or analysis, evaluation, and creation (Bloom 1964). As learning grows in complexity, the facilitator must be sensitive enough to cue from existing experience and to challenge the known to move into yet unknown domains. Dewey states:

Facilitated learning means to select those things within the range of existing experience that have the promise and potential of presenting new problems which by stimulating new ways of observation and judgment will expand the area of further experience... What is already won [is] not a fixed possession but an agency and instrumentality for opening new fields which make new demands upon existing powers of observation and of intelligent use of memory. Connectedness in growth must be his constant watchword ([1938] 1977: 75).

This quote from Dewey's work *Education and Experience* speaks directly to adult education, or more specifically to the work in the *ArtRose* ensemble. We all begin with our existing experience and skill and know that continuity, interrelation, openness, curiosity, and reflection coupled with the supportive strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® can engender new embodied, tacit knowledge. Acknowledging the inbred hierarchy of our social construct, professional (myself) and non-professional (the other dancers), ensemble members strive to experience our dance and dance making

together in a way this occupational discrepancy can be dismantled in a manner that all creative and organizational decision making and taking processes are arrived through processes of egalitarian and distributed authority.

For Dewey continuity and interaction are not only the components of learning but also an expression of imagination (LW (10) 270–76). Imagination (re)constructs and broadens experience, endowing it with resonant and discrete representations in the environment of the experience. Qualitative experience based in *continuity and interaction* points to the recognition that both the past and the present are contained in the future, and that the capacity to extract meaning from experience can create a desire and curiosity to go forward with learning. Dewey writes:

We always live at the time we live and not at some other time, and only by extracting at each present time the full meaning of each present experience are we prepared for doing the same thing in the future' ([1938] 1977: 49).

A half-century later Sheets-Johnstone puts forth a similar claim: Learning takes place from the place where one is in the present, not from where one wishes to be (1979). Concepts of continuity, organic unity and the interrelationship of the environment and the person are deeply engrained in Dewey's thought (Filson 1992: 51). As such, he prefers to call his idea of cooperative social inquiry 'cultural naturalism' (Dewey 1938 1977: 28). Dewey's naturalism provides the setting for his outspoken support for change and reconstruction in education as fundamental parts of biological and evolutionary processes of human experience and adaptation to social and natural environments (Dotts 2016: 111). His ideas of the continuity of experience and of nature source from Darwin's evolutionary theory (MacKenzie 2016). Connecting to Darwin's theory of adaptation provides Dewey with a model that accentuates both the creative and the contingent dimensions of practical action. As such, he can dispense with permanence as the primary category through which to think about the human species<sup>36</sup> and he simultaneously foregrounds the world of practical action as the

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<sup>36</sup> In Dewey's 1910 article, "The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy," as a response to Darwin's appeal to a biological model, Dewey highlights the way in which contingency infuses the social and natural world, potentially defying human mastery and control.

primary locus for where knowledge is meaningfully possible. Here, experimentalism emerges at the nexus where contingency and practical action and enquiry in Dewey's philosophy meet (Rogers 2007: 95). As stated before, Dewey's naturalistic view looks to the qualitative aspects of experience, to the situations that are felt, experienced, undergone and in this sense known 'preconsciously'. Qualities are not epistemic intermediaries between the experiencers and the world (MacKenzie 2016: 24-25). In this sense, Dewey's knowing aligns with enaction theory, which puts forth that the qualitative dimension is how the world shows itself in and through engagement by sentient organisms (Noë 2004). This makes his naturalistic philosophy so indelibly tied to aesthetics and ethics. It views the social construct as that which is always in flux, always in the making, always in process of becoming, what Dewey calls social enquiry (Frega 2015: 101). 'Education, in its broadest sense, is the means of this social continuity of life' (Dewey 2008: 8). Purpose in the learning environment is cooperatively active and is framed by freedom and collective power. Dewey's main contention is that social processes can become reasonable only to the extent that reason, defined as reflection, are brought to bear on them, and intelligent forces replace forces of mere power and authority.

According to Dewey, the procedural criteria that define the quality of human interaction are communication, participation, sharing, and the interpretation of meanings (Frega 2016: 107). Dewey communicates that the task of his social philosophy or cultural naturalism is to promote guidance for the betterment of empathic, ethical, and social connectivity (MacKenzie 2016). Dewey's ideas interface with those of social somatics; these are the visions that power the *ArtRose* community in dance, that look to nurture the natural proclivities of its members through integrative and continuous learning in a climate of ethical connectivity.

#### **4.2.1 Dewey and Democracy**

Dewey differentiates between an organizational and an associative form democracy. As both. The organizational form is a structural concept; the associative form is

embedded in the concepts of continuity and interaction ([1916] 2008). Congruent with his ideas of learning by doing as processes of continuity and interaction, Dewey's interest in democracy lies in the perspective of the associative form, as this is a practice and enquiry that looks to the intersubjective processes of how a social 'grouping' forms, reforms and renews itself through shared interests and communication (Dewey [1916] 2008: 86, Filson 1992: 38). Indeed, the *ArtRose* ensemble is an association. For Dewey, democracy is synonymous with community itself, a form of collectively shared experience that supports inclusiveness and just ways that human groups can function (Dewey LW 1927 (2): 286). Societal learning is the self-educative impact of an association or procedural democratic practice that is cyclical, as it reacts back on the practice informing it, and thereby contributes to its development (Filson 1992: 198). A community or associations of democratic practice are thus a transformative and emancipatory idea that aims to achieve more equitable forms for human interaction. Dewey posits in his work *Democracy and Education*:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity. These more numerous and more varied points of contact denote a greater diversity of stimuli to which an individual has to respond; they consequently put a premium on variation in his action ([1916] 2008: 80).

For democracy to flourish, there must be common interests and horizontally open pathways of communication and a commitment to reconsider one's individual interests in the light of understanding the interests of others (Gutmann 1987: 76-7). In addition, the members of a democratic association must possess the resolve to steer the social experience as a transformative condition of human beings interacting in the solidarity of community and heightened individuality (Filson 1992: 104). Dewey's proposition is echoed by continental philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer stated: 'Practice is conducting oneself and acting in solidarity. Solidarity, however, is the decisive condition and basis of all social reason' (1986: 87). Dewey's democratic ideas

of change and reconstruction connect to governance through an ontological lens that views and assesses change and reconstruction as encompassing the processes of human adaptation to social and natural environments in all forms of life, political, biological and evolutionary (Dotts 2016: 111). His democratic ideal requires that people acknowledge interdependence as a factor in social control, which can only take place through intersubjective communication and the recognition of mutual and varied points of shared common interests ([1916] 2008: 84). These conditions must therefore always be amenable to change or ‘continuous readjustment.’ Therefore, Dewey conceives of the democratic process as an evolutionary means of social adaptation and transformation. In *Democracy and Education*, he asserts that the experience of communication requires the participants to formulate perspectives that are not their own, to understand something as another would see it ([1916] 2008: 16, 77-80), a process whereby a person assimilates imaginatively something of another’s experience. This contributes to actualizing ‘what one is capable of becoming through association with others in all the offices of life’ (Dewey [1916] 2008: 9-11). Continuous readjustment of these two factors in the context of ever new situations is precisely what characterizes Dewey’s idea of a democratically constituted society ([1916] 2008:79-81). Summarizing from Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* social theorist Aaron Schutz puts forth that:

democratic communities create a tremendous web of conscious interdependence in which there are ‘numerous and varied . . . points of shared’ interest that are interpreted and acted upon differently by different participants. In this way, ‘the intellectual variations of the individual in observation, imagination, judgment, and invention . . . can become the agencies of social progress (2001: 300-312).

The entire previous section speaks of the ethos of *ArtRose*, one of collectively and reciprocally shared transformative and emancipatory experience, the acceptance of varied perspectives of shared common interests and the cyclical experience of learning and development in a form of democratic association. Dewey’s *Democratic Ideal* requires that one acknowledge interdependence, experienced as a ‘recognition of mutual interests as a factor in social control,’ [and the desire] for ‘continuous readjustment’ by confronting change with continuous intercourse ([1916] 2008: 84).

#### **4.2.2 Reflective Thinking**

Dewey's model of progressive education, facilitated learning, and teaching, is one that adapts to the needs and capacities of the learners, respects their individual natures, and creates conditions wherein purposeful experience can occur. This makes it a learning method available to everyone. As such, facilitated learning is not a function of an arbitrary display of the power or authority of a single person but rather is exercised democratically and with fairness in the interest of the group so that interaction does not violate the freedom and therefore the power of individuals (Dewey [1916] 2008).

The function of reflective action is to integrate one's experience into the larger scope of one's world. Reflection is to construct meaning, to formulate relationships and continuities between experience(s) and the knowledge that one carries and between that knowledge and the knowledge produced by people other than oneself (Rodgers 2002: 845-847). Reflective thought, for Dewey, is the bridge that connects experience and meaning and gives direction and impetus to growth (Rodgers 2002: 850). Dewey defines reflection as 'active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends' ([1933] 1997: 100). He claims that the process of reflection moves the learner from a state of perplexity (which he calls disequilibrium) to a state of balance (equilibrium) ([1916] 2008: 150).

'The function of reflective thought is, therefore, to transform a situation in which there is experienced obscurity, doubt, conflict, disturbance of some sort into a situation that is clear, coherent, settled, harmonious' ([1933] 1997: 100). As experience is a function of one's interactions in the environment, it calls for cumulative change. Change happens by losing and regaining equilibrium with one's environment. Hence, learning moves through liminal periods of disruption. Harmony and equilibrium are the results of rhythmic resolution to tension understood as an adjustment to the environment. Dewey's conjecture reflects fundamental principles of the Feldenkrais Method® as reflection in action, the disruption of habitual patterns of movement in order to recalibrate one's nervous system and attuning to the effect of one's movement and

therefore being in relation to gravity (environment) (Feldenkrais 1972, Ginsberg 1988). Therefore, the past is a resource that can inform the present. In this instance, the future is a promise that surrounds the present as an aura. Memories and anticipations that express and privilege continuity, aesthetic dimensions and ethically consequent interrelations are absorbed into the present. Intelligent action and evaluation require reflection on the past, reconstruction of the present, and vision for the future.

Dewey suggests subprocesses that are involved in reflective thought. These include states of perplexity, hesitation, and doubt; and an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief ([1938]1997: 9). He delineates the various phases of reflective thought as follows:

- Perplexity: encountering a situation that is not fully known,
- Elaboration: reference to past experiences,
- Hypotheses: developing augmentation,
- Comparing hypotheses: establishing coherence between differing hypotheses,
- Acting: experiencing 'mastery satisfaction, enjoyment' in acting upon the selected hypotheses (1933: 106-115).

Dewey asserts that there are aspects and not steps to reflective activity. Reflective thinking is not necessarily a cumulative procedure, but rather one that modulates between the subprocesses. Especially important for Dewey is the need for a second order, or a reflective awareness of the methods themselves, or as Feldenkrais says: 'learning how to learn' (1972). What Dewey emphasizes is that 'reflective thinking impels to inquiry' ([1933] 1997: 7) and reflective action integrates experience. As such, he identifies three primary and essential attitudes that further reflective action. These are:

- Openness, or a freeing from prejudice,
- Wholeheartedness, complete absorption in the material, and
- Responsibility, in facing the consequences of one's own action ([1933]1997: 6-15).



Dewey recognizes impulse as a catalyst of action; however, he warns that impulse should not become self-indulgent. Dewey states that freedom demands self-control, which services the inhibition of impulses<sup>37</sup> so that intentional action can ensue. Foresight, or one's faculty for self-observation and memory in order to evaluate the consequences and effects of the impulse is the strategy that Dewey believes is essential for meaningful experience. Dewey states that reflection is intentional action that 'emancipates us from merely impulsive and merely routine activity [...] It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind and impulsive into intelligent action' ([1933]1997: 17). The intentional action and reflective thinking for Dewey, is what Moshe Feldenkrais defines as mature behaviour, action taken from informed choice rather than compulsive or impulsive behaviour, by reflecting in action that requires the practitioner to reduce the speed of her action. Both speak of slowing down to be able to act with enhanced consciousness at the moment of action from a state of equilibrium. Coherency between intention and action support democratic interaction in community.

#### **4.2.3 Relevance for the *ArtRose* Ensemble**

Dewey's naturalistic enquiry of experience is intersubjective, communicative, and social. It is a living through and acceptance of the consequences of one's actions. The conditions of the experience form the basis of a powerful resource for critical reflection and social transformation (Kadlec 2006: 522). Meaningful experience emphasizes the individual, social, and environmental transformative nature of reconstructive and self-formative enquiry based in reflective, morally just action taken in regard to the social unit. Enquiry aims at growth, further integration, and enrichment of meaning. This is a practice of deliberation and evaluation in concrete

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<sup>37</sup> Several somatic practices work with impulse inhibition. Dewey was a strong supporter of F.M Alexander and practitioner of his technique (Schusterman 2008: 189). The Alexander Technique regards the inhibition of impulse as the starting place for learning and change. The Feldenkrais Method works with impulse inhibition through reflection-in-action, a process that asks the practitioner to slow down to simultaneously reflect while acting. This can lead to more consciously informed behaviour. Feldenkrais defined this as 'mature behaviour' one proceeding through choice and not through compulsion (Feldenkrais 1949).

situations. Dewey's practice theory of social enquiry and learning does not point to declarative knowledge nor to verification of knowledge but rather to the knowledge that is felt in the situated reality of one's experience. This quality of 'knowing' is what philosopher Michael Polanyi (1958) and educationalist Lee Shulman (1988) term 'tacit knowledge'. Dewey's conception of enquiry or tacit knowledge is contextually sensitive and discursively open, meaning that the ends of enquiry are always subject to assessment and revision. In other words, the *means* contain more value than the *ends*.

Reflective enquiry takes time and asks the practitioner for awareness of herself in the situation and the ability to slow down in order to bring to light the tacit knowledge that might already be known. In the practice of *ArtRose*, I argue that tacit knowledge is generated, formed, communicated, and transformed in a democratic and self-reflective community. Processes of critical self-reflection can only come to fruition when all participants engage in the creation of knowledge in a nonauthoritarian, mutually beneficial way that recognizes and respects the deeply contextual nature of learning. This includes identifying and resolving vague or indeterminate situations such as conflict, or disagreements expressed both through actions as well as through language.

Dewey stresses that conflict is essential for democratic processes; conflict broadens cultural horizons and renews one's own reflective processes. Diverse social, economic, and political groups often view their environments differently, sometimes in conflicting ways. Dewey argues the necessity for making possible the dialectical and democratic deliberations that can respond to emerging conflicts, to broaden cultural horizons and to renew thinking. ([1916] 2008: 300-302). All social groups encounter problems, as this is 'de facto' for growth, transformation, and renewal. Dewey's ideas of democratic associations, strategies for conflict as described above, and learning, reflective thinking and action provide a framework for recognizing, supporting, and promoting the reciprocal working processes in the *ArtRose* community in dance. Members of the *ArtRose* community agree to disagree and know that everyone's voice will be acknowledged and valued even when it challenges one's own system of truth. In my role as facilitator, I do not make artistic decisions for any of the other members. For

example, in the making of *Mut und Gnade* I did not ‘cast’ the roles nor did I take the decisions for a dancer’s participation in any given scene. Each dancer made their own decisions, roles and scenes evolved organically as a response to the dancer’s own inclinations. Each person was responsible to assume the consequences of their decisions both for themselves and for its effect in the group. The construct of the work, *Mut und Gnade* did not prioritize physical skill, nor did it highlight any particular dancer or dancers. Participation was equally distributed. We all sought to find a common denominator in our differing registers of practice so that the work projected a reciprocal exchange of unspoken dialogue, rather than a display of differing physical skill. As the professional dance artist in the group, I adjusted my register of practice and participation in a manner that harmonized with the others.

The fact that Dewey understands knowledge as tacit rather than declarative implies that there is no absolute right or wrong; everyone moves, grows, develops, and changes at their own pace and with their own experience. Present learning is dependent on the past. In this sense, the life experience and age of the members of the *ArtRose* community these are understood as an advantage and not a handicap. Learning can be a lifelong endeavour when one accepts and celebrates the place where one is now in understanding that learning relies on the biological and human processes of continuity and interaction. No one is too old to change, to develop, to forge new paths. The work, *Mut und Gnade* investigated processes of letting go to begin again – to experience something new – to continue to learn. This idea echoes Dewey’s call for lifelong learning as a process of continuity and interaction. The performativity of members of the *ArtRose* ensemble is endowed with a depth of expressivity, authenticity and reflectivity that surpasses that of the emerging professional dancers with whom I engage at my place of employment.<sup>38</sup>

Dewey’s ideas of education, democracy and reflection are important for this research, as their advocacy underscores the ethos of *ArtRose* and offers reflective guidance in dealing with both known and untried situations. The *ArtRose* community in dance

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<sup>38</sup> This is the Palucca University of Dance Dresden where I work with both young pre-professional dancers (BFA) and returning professionals in the MA program in dance pedagogy.

weathers moments of unease or instability in enacting Dewey's ideas of democracy, learning and reflective action, as it is a community in which each person must act not only from a place of personal choice but, of collective awareness and must accept the consequences. Dewey's perspective of living in the world together is a social somatic one, a morally ethical vantage that looks for a reflective practitioner whose actions are determined through the informed choice of accepting the processes – the means – rather than striving to reach a particular end. In the *ArtRose* community, it is the normative order that sustains the collective life; continuity and reflective interaction keeps this community flexible and stable, able to encourage difference, conflict and change and to accept, negotiate and renegotiate that which emerges in our practice together.

### **4.3 Communities of Practice**

Legitimate peripheral practice, an idea embedded in situated learning and developed by social anthropologist Jean Lave and computer scientist Etienne Wenger in the beginning of the 1990s, puts forth many of the same democratic and participatory values as Dewey's described in the previous section. However, Lave's and Wenger's idea emphasises the structural organization of the communities. It provides a way to speak about the relations between new and more seasoned members and about activities, identities, artefacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. They state that 'learning is a process of participation in communities of practice, participation 4.3 is at first legitimately peripheral but that increases gradually in engagement and complexity' (1991: 22). A person's intentions for learning are configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a socio-cultural practice. Therefore, learning proceeds through increasing participation in communities, concerns the whole person acting in the world [...] and is an evolving, continuously renewed set of relations (Lave and Wenger 1991: 49-50). In other words, as new members become more competent, they become more involved in the main processes of the community. Newcomers move from legitimate peripheral participation to 'full participation' (Lave and Wenger

1991: 37). Learning is, thus, seen not as the acquisition of knowledge by individuals but rather as taking place in situations of co-participation. The community endows the learning with structure.

Legitimate peripheral participation expresses the processes of orientation and integration for people interested in joining the *ArtRose* ensemble. In my role as primary facilitator of our practice, I focus my cues and directives on connecting past experiences with the present in order to keep the shared practice evolving in such a way that myriad forms of competencies can grow. In this sense, newcomers require time to become familiar with the practice. They are supported by the older members, who have become experts in this practice. A newcomer may observe the practice of the experts; new and seasoned members dance together so that the newer ones can experience what it feels like to dance relationally in this ensemble. After a period of orientation, some newcomers do not remain or are not invited to join the community. Becoming a fully participating member of *ArtRose* is not a question of physical competence but rather, the willingness to pursue a shared interest in somatic improvisational dance, knowing that personal agency and affect evolve from collective awareness and agency.

In the late 1990s, Wenger expanded the idea of legitimate peripheral participation into the theory of communities of practice. He defines this as a process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in a subject or area (a domain) join together regularly over an extended period of time (community) to share their common ideas and strategies in practice with one another (practice). In a nutshell, he states: 'Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly' (1998: 10).

This idea deconstructs the notion that learning, and education are something that individuals do, that learning has a beginning and an end, that it is separated from one's leisure activities, and that it is intrinsically related to teaching, or a teacher. Rather, learning is social and comes largely from our experience of participating in daily life.

Lave proposes that 'learning is ubiquitous in ongoing activity, though often unrecognized as such' (1993: 5). This echoes Dewey's belief that learning can be the incidental outcome of social processes. Learning is mediated by the differences of perspectives among the co-participants.

People continuously create their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities. The motivation to become a more central participant in a community of practice can provide a powerful incentive for learning. Over time, this collective learning results in practices that reflect both the pursuit of our enterprises and the attendant social relations. These practices are thus the property of a kind of community created over time by the sustained pursuit of a shared enterprise. It makes sense, therefore, to call these kinds of associations communities of practice (Wenger 1998: 45).

Communities of practice weave together multiple discourses about the nature and meaning of learning and their implications in educational and organizational designs. Both Dewey's and Wenger's practice theory presumes that humankind is a social being, that knowledge is the combination of competence and the way in which it is acquired, that epistemology is one of active participation and that meaning is distilled from the ability to experience one's environment in a purposeful way. Wenger builds his theoretical design around the integrity and interdependence of four components: practice, identity, community and meaning. Wenger states, 'Participation here refers not just to local events of engagement in certain activities with certain people, but to a more encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities' (1998: 4).

Wegner's theory explicitly delineates the importance, complexity, and inevitability of participation in the communities of practice that make up the infrastructure of our lives and our learning from them. He declares that we do not practice what we learn; rather the learning is embedded in the practice, '[...] practice is not merely a context for learning something else. Engagement is practice – in its unfolding, multidimensional complexity – is the stage and the object, the road and the

destination' (1998: 95). The common interest is shared through practice, and this practice evolves into a community. This is precisely the case with the *ArtRose* ensemble. This 'community in dance' formed and reforms through its participants' commitment to share a form of Feldenkrais-infused expressionist improvisational dance in a committed climate of shared responsibility and authority.

Wenger defines *practice* as the interdependence of seven subcategories. These are:

- Practice as meaning: participation and reification,
- Practice as community: mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire,
- Practice as learning: continuity and discontinuity, the planned and the emergent,
- Practice as boundary: multiplicity of belonging and permeability,
- Practice as locality: local and the global,
- Knowing in practice: interplay between experience and competence (1998:100).

Practice as meaning is derived through negotiation, a combination of engaged participation and creative reification. Practice as community is the relation of the mutual engagement of complimentary contributions, the joint enterprise of mutual accountability, and of the shared repertoire, that joins through the collective development of a shared practice. Practice as learning is resilient and welcomes the unexpected. Practice as boundary defines the dynamics of interpersonal communication within the community. Practice as locality delineates the socio-cultural context of the community. Finally, practice as knowing is the interaction of competence and experience, as in this combination lies the potential for transformation.

*ArtRose* fulfils all six points of Wenger's communities of practice: a specific situation, a particular cultural context, a shared interest, shared practice, and its reification in the dance performance. The quality and meaning of the shared learning are dependent upon the situation, the place, the environment, the context in which this learning takes place. Therefore, communities of practice are examples of situated learning. Situated learning depends on two claims that knowledge is contextualized, and that new

knowledge and learning are properly conceived as located in communities of practice (Tennant 1997:77). Ideas, commitments, and memories are embedded in the community of practice that one shares. As a learning association, the value lies with the community and not exclusively with the individual. Learning through informed and committed participation, through collective engagement can effect behavioural change. As everyone changes in the process, the skill being mastered also changes. What the community maintains as a constant are certain modalities and modes of co-participation in which the relational practice is embedded. Haraway speaks of situated knowledges as the way that 'the intertwining of experience, practice and theory produces knowledge that operates in relation to established knowledge and thus has the capacity to extend or to alter that what is known' (1991: 143-145). Knowledge, as Haraway, Dewey and Wenger posit, is engendered through continuity and interaction. Wenger states: 'Inevitably, our practices deal with the profound issue of how to be a human being. In this sense, the formation of a community of practice is also the negotiation of identities' (1998: 149). As practice and identity are mutually interdependent, their textures intertwined, there exists overlap in the definition of their characteristics. For Wenger identity:

- lives in the experience,
- changes through continual negotiation,
- forms, in part, through social membership,
- exists in the trajectory and events of time,
- combines multiple forms of membership,
- is an exchange of the micro and macro worlds (1998: 112).

He writes: 'Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or, conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person' (1998: 215). Learning becomes meaningful when it is integrated within the identity of participation.



In Wenger's work *Communities of Practice*, he speaks of the transformative nature of learning as a place for *becoming*, not simply a place for the improvement of competency. This idea is essentially what the members of the community of practice *ArtRose* experience, and what our work together explores. In the *ArtRose* ensemble, people learn that dance is not only a gymnastic function for health and well-being but a conduit for enhancing identity through artistic expressivity, to sense and to feel ourselves more fully in the community of practice. Newcomers learn from the expertise of others, share the values of the ensemble through dance, dance making and performance, partake in administrative and organisational issues and engage with problem-solving in an egalitarian and reciprocal way. We facilitate each other's learning through physical practice, interactive speech, and reflection. Learning and identity are inextricably linked. Thereby, the skills being mastered change, and everyone changes in the process.

The modes of belonging, participation and the (re)forming of identities in the joint enterprise of our mutual engagement in the *ArtRose* ensemble are fundamentally the willingness to invite others into our practice and to engage in relation as Dewey suggests with an attitude of openness, wholeheartedness, and responsibility. Wenger's statement that 'communities of practice are about knowing, but also about being together, living meaningfully, developing a satisfying identity, and altogether being human' (1998: 134), accurately describes that for which the *ArtRose* community strives. The following section explores the essential dimension of communities in practice that deals with the socio-political efficacies of the *ArtRose* ensemble both in a micro vantage and in the context of artistic performative practice with older amateur dancing people in Germany's cultural landscape. In addressing this question, I look to Hannah Arendt's call for communicative action.

#### **4.4 Communicative Action**

Only the experience of sharing a common human world with others who look at it with different perspectives can enable us to see reality in the round and to

develop a shared common sense. Without it we are each driven back on our own subjective experience, in which only our feelings, wants and desires have reality (Arendt 1958: x111).

Hannah Arendt's statement champions the necessity for engaging in the world from multiple perspectives to create one's own reality from an enhanced depth of perception. Subjective experience and agency thrive through relation, and relation can happen when one opens oneself to multifarious vantage points that enable one to contribute to, and to share in a sub-sector of a common human world. In her seminal work of political philosophy, *The Human Condition* (1958), Arendt speaks of the webs of human relationships, of a communality involved in all political acting, which at the same time retains the plurality of the political world<sup>39</sup>. Her concept of plurality is built on the factors of distinction and equality inherent in every human being. These two factors denote that all human beings belong to the same species and can act and relating to others in ways that is unique and distinctive and infinitely complex and unpredictable, and that no two people are ever interchangeable, as everyone is endowed with a unique biography and perspective on the world (1958: 7-8). This is very close to what Jean-Luc Nancy calls a social being as 'being -with' (1998), and Arendt addresses as the 'plural in me' (1958). Plurality and freedom are the two defining features of Arendt's idea of action that borrows from Aristotle's *energeia* or 'actualization'<sup>40</sup> which 'means to take an initiative, to begin, to set something into motion' (Arendt 1958: 177). All human beings are endowed with this capacity to do the unexpected by virtue of being born. Action as the realization of freedom is therefore rooted in *natality*, which affirms the recurring possibility for new beginnings (1958: 9). As Arendt puts it: 'the new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world

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<sup>39</sup> Arendt posits a construction of being in the world that she calls the *vita activa*, three necessities and capacities of human beings: labor, the activity for providing the biological needs that sustain human life; work, the ability to build and provide for *worldliness*; and action, the capacity that reveals the identity of the agent and affirms the reality of the world (Arendt 1958). These three subsections of what Arendt calls the human condition must not be regarded in a reductionist or autonomous manner as they are interactive and inform one another. One distinction between work and action can be made with the questions of 'Who are you?' and 'What can you do' (Passerin E'Entreves 2019: 12).

<sup>40</sup> In addition to Aristotle's idea of *energia*, Arendt sources from the etymological potentialities contained in the Greek word *archein* that has multiple understandings, including, 'to lead' 'to rule' and/or 'to begin'. Arendt's interprets *archein* as 'to begin', equating it with unexpectedness and novelty' (Arendt 1958: 177).

only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting' (1958: 9). Thus, acting in this sense invites life-long learning, the permanent possibility for taking further action. Furthermore, to take an initiative is neither to impose nor to lead but to catalyse singularity, to begin an undertaking. Beginning, for Arendt, is the opposite of regularity, as new beginnings that break into the world create conditions for action in which the unexpected can be expected so that one becomes able to perform what is infinitely improbable (1958: 178). Thus, the material qualities of movement are not only something that moves but motion that becomes 'activation' and actualization of corporal and critical capacities towards the composition and formation of engaged modes of existence (Lepecki 2013: 32). Arendt writes that '[...] the work is not what follows and extinguishes the process but is embedded in it; the performance is the work, is *energia* and belongs among the arts' (1958: 206-207), as the reification is identical with the performance act itself. Because it is an 'end in itself', the true value of acting can only stem from the virtuosity with which we actualize our capacity to act in concert and to start something new, not the goal we seek to achieve through our action (Arendt 1958: 198-199).

While she stresses that all aspects of the human condition are somehow related to politics, 'plurality is specifically *the* condition [...] of all political life' (1958: 7). Freedom and plurality are about the right to action and opinion and to exercise powers of agency and to live as a distinct and unique being among equals (1958: 178).

#### **4.4.1 Unpredictability, Irreversibility, and Anonymity**

Arendt contends that action, through word and deed, is the only activity that goes on directly between people without the intermediary of other things or matter and that is dependent on three factors: unpredictability, irreversibility, and the anonymity of the authors. Unpredictability and irreversibility become manifest as action takes place in a context defined by plurality, so that both the outcome and the processes of any action can never be predicted by nor reversed through the intentions of any singular participant. She proposes that the consequences of action are boundless, as '[...] one

deed, and sometimes one word, suffices to change every constellation... [As] we are never able to foretell with certainty the outcome and end of any action is simply that action has no end' (1958; 190, 233). Therefore, every action becomes a reaction, every deed a source of future deeds, and none of these can be stopped or subsequently undone. Arendt's ideas of the irreversibility and unpredictability of action are tempered by two faculties inherent in action itself: forgiveness and promise. Both of these faculties are connected to temporality, as the one looks to the past and can mitigate the irreversibility of action by absolving a person of the unintended consequences of actions, and the second, looks to the future and can moderate the uncertainty of action by setting up parameters for action that can limit the unpredictability of the future. Both faculties depend on plurality, as forgiveness and promises are mostly made and received in concert with others. Arendt stresses that they are both expressions of human freedom, since without the faculty to rectify a past event or the ability to influence processes that have been initiated, one would be trapped in 'an automatic necessity bearing all the marks of inexorable laws' (1958: 246). The powers of forgiveness and promise endow Arendt's 'actualization' with empathy. The third factor, anonymity of authorship, implies that the individual must not relate with purpose or satisfaction to that action which she has taken<sup>41</sup> (Markell 2015: 79). In this sense, Arendt separates the private from the social and political spheres. One can act both for the common good and in one's own interests. In the context of the *ArtRose* ensemble, common interest and change in the group are indelibly tied to each member's own progress and change. Interaction in the group facilitates the change and development. The unpredictability of action is evidenced in the *ArtRose* ensemble by the fact that we work with dance improvisation. In forgiveness, we recognize our own weakness and embrace difference; promise is the ability to clearly define the manners of our dealing with one another in our dance and the organizational structure and to revise these when necessary.

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<sup>41</sup> Arendt seems to suggest [that action] 'must somehow be indelibly tied to individual deeds and fully immersed in a processual field that is not only impure and unreliable [...] but also indifferent to us as individuals, to the needs for meaning or purpose or satisfaction that we bring to what we do' (Markell 2017: 92)

#### 4.4.2 Power

Arendt's concept of action – acting in concert to set something in motion – and reliant on freedom and plurality – is inextricably tied to the notion of power. She understands power as the property of a community in which consensus is arrived at without compulsion, in uncoerced communication and collective engagement (Passerin E'Entreves 2019: 10). Indeed, power is inherent in the very existence of political communities and derives and maintains its legitimacy through processes of free and undistorted communication. Therefore, power is realized through the action of coming together; [it] 'springs up between men when they act together and vanishes the moment they disperse [...] and is what keeps the public realm, the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men, in existence' (Arendt 1958, Passerin E'Entreves 2019: 18). Power is actualized where action is undertaken for communicative (rather than strategic or instrumental) purposes and where speech is employed to disclose our intentions and to articulate motives to others (Arendt 1958). Power can thus be understood as participatory democracy, a quality of communities of practice that Arendt, Dewey, and Wenger put forth.

Arendt gives the group its legitimacy in the greater social realm. All three Dewey, and Wenger, and Arendt, speak of responsibility – of action in a non-coerced manner, of acting from a somatic perspective of self-perception in relation to others in community. To weigh and balance different perspectives is to arrive at genuine listening and responsible responding. Arendt's irreversibility points to responsibility, and for Dewey it points to continuity, in that whatever happens does not disappear; that experience remains engrained in our beings and impacts those with whom we share the community. Therefore, all experience and action taken are irreversible, but these actions live in a continuum and influence future learning. Wenger offers a structure that is helpful for maintaining stability in the group despite fluctuating membership. The easing into the group, the learning of the ethos and procedures of the group, provides support in clarifying the division of responsibilities. Arendt's call for communicative action encourages the *ArtRose* community in dance to venture out

into the greater community to increase the visibility of dance art with older amateur dancing people and carry the work into the political domain.

It has demonstrated how social processes in the community that proceed along the tenets of these three practice-oriented theorists can support the sustainability of the community – egalitarian, democratic, courageous, and empathetically responsive.

#### **4.5 Politics, Dance and *ArtRose* as a Community of Practice**

Both dance and politics have much in common, as they take place when people make, preserve, and amend the general imperatives under which they live (Haywood 2013: 2). Philosopher Giorgio Agamben echoes this with his statement: 'Art is inherently political because it is an activity that renders inactive and contemplates the senses and habitual gestures of human beings and in so doing opens them up to a new potential use' (2008: 204). Lepecki speaks of the interface of art and dance as 'when both produce ontological-perceptual disjunctions and eccentric movements in language and sensation that can promote a disbanding of circulatory imperatives and habitual gestures tied to linguistic and behavioural clichés for subjectivity to make space for new bodily capabilities' (2013: 22). In this sense, the political is a condition that moves beyond politics, when the conception of politics rests exclusively in the structure and organization of units of rule that offer modes of governance, negotiation, and conflict resolution. Political action differentiates from politics, as the former is the setting of something new in motion. Dance studies scholar Randy Martin puts forth the implication of dance within politics and politics within dance through the idea of mobilization (1998: 4), as the energy to move is conceptualized as a basis for collective action that invites diversity and shapes and connects dancing selves in a manner that prompts agency. Dance scholar Rebekah Kowal adds to this idea with her proposition that dancing has the capacity to make the expressive efficacious, galvanizing the agency of individuals and groups in the work of constitutive action that functions on the levels of signification and of the social simultaneously (2010).

‘Politics and communities in dance are participatory social practices of shared interests in the public sphere that develop between bodies in motion’ (Kowal, Siegmund and Martin 2017: 3). The nature of setting shared interests into action, can makes a ‘community of practice in dance’, as *ArtRose* political. Actualizing our capacity to act in concert, to set off trains of unpredictable events, underlies the ethos of the *ArtRose* community. The action, the mobilization that occurs in the *ArtRose* community in dance, is political action. Our activities do not prioritize performing antagonisms or conflicts, and the ensemble did not form in 2011 with a conscious political agenda. However, the *ArtRose* ensemble fulfils Arendt’s call for communicative action, or the setting of something new in process. We accept the unpredictable and irreversible with openness and curiosity and respond with empathy to their consequences, divide responsibility and power through negotiated action in word and deed; share the conviction that new beginnings are infinitely possible and know that our communicative action effects change not only in the microcosm of our community but also in the socio-political network in the greater environment. Our dancing, dance-making and performance make visible and give a voice to an underrepresented demographic of society traditionally absent from the concert stage in the German cultural landscape. The dance action of this nonconformist artistic ensemble with amateur adults on concert stages asks the public to partake and to participate in the performative experience they are witnessing (Copeland 1983), meaning to release presuppositions of what dance can and should be in the German cultural hegemony that overwhelmingly identifies concert dance as an art form of youthful vitality and physical virtuosity. Questions of accessibility, classification and efficacy arise in the work of the *ArtRose* ensemble. For example, for whom and where should the dance take place, what practices and movement materials can be understood and valued as concert dance and what forms and qualities of participation emerge? These questions imbue the *ArtRose* ensemble with political significance as they provoke and challenge cultural normatives. Philosopher Jacques Rancière holds that the political is a redistribution of the sensible that reconfigures one’s perceptions that such as to allow hitherto unheard voices to be heard (2010). At the corporeal level, he speaks of how

the primary task of the political is to explore new capacities to perceive, to express, and to move: 'politics [...] reframes the given by inventing new ways of making sense of the sensible, new configurations between the visible and the invisible, and between the audible and the inaudible... in short new bodily capacities' (2010: 39). **Action in the ArtRose ensemble is not only one of eagerness to repeat and perhaps improve that what is known, but also one that welcomes the unexpected, unpredictable, and irreversible with attention and responsiveness as a challenge for new beginnings.**

Arendt's notion of communicative action accents the 'carrying out' in collaboration. This borrows from Plato's notion of *prattein*, a form of action that '[...] has the intelligence of redirecting an action in the course of continuing it' (van Eikels 2019: 117-119). Arendt's interpretation of *prattein* is one that 'appreciates the freedom shining out along the lines of multiple deviations and cherishes the relative independence that self-organized practice is gaining where dependencies diversify' (2019: 118). Therefore, to maintain the sustainability of the autonomous and structurally coupling system of *ArtRose*, its members must agree to disagree; thereby, accepting the need to acknowledge and respect worldviews different than their own in a manner of mutual adjustment. This means we must all learn to accommodate other persons' values into our own worlds regardless of their differing world perspectives and to respect our own and other person's values and understandings within each one's respective world. Our fundamentally held and differing interests are negotiated but left intact. Through dialogue, these are changed so that a more intense mutuality can result (Dewey [1916] 2008: 82-87, Dotts 2016: 102). In the corporeality of *ArtRose*, the individual, relational and socio-cultural layers of respect, creativity, knowledge and understanding exist in the small, everyday practice of dancing together. This forms our social reality and provides a framework for the cooperative enterprise in which we are engaging.

Although the research question that addresses the political efficacies of the work of the *ArtRose* community was not the generative one at the inception of my doctoral journey, it has become integral to my research. Over the course of our nine years of continual practice, the political significance and necessity of the action of this



ensemble in the greater socio-political and cultural landscape for its potentialities to broaden aesthetic appreciation for dance art created by non-trained amateur older adults, which moves beyond fitness and well-being, has become increasingly relevant for me. In drawing Arendt's philosophy of communicative action into the construct of the *ArtRose* ensemble, I have articulated the rationale that demonstrates that the work of this community is both culturally and politically significant. Clearly, a singular community can engender socio-political and cultural change; however, only when networks of similar ensembles form, do the political efficacies take on expanded dimensions. Consequently, the ensemble *ArtRose* is a founding member of a national initiative for Dance Art & Elders (Initiative Tanzkunst & Alter) created in 2016<sup>42</sup>. At that time, the ensemble had progressed through the linear psychological construct of group establishment known as 'storming, forming, norming, and performing'<sup>43</sup>. In this sense, we had reached a point where the community identity and continuity had become clearly established and reflected stability both in its social being and in its artistic mandate (e.g., performing). Our actions and understanding thereof moved from a localized dance practice with a political by-product, to an interconnected and intentionally exposed ensemble for political action. We came to notice that our cohesion lay not within a single set of actors, but rather that its identity of non-authoritative authorship and its continuity could sustain fluctuating membership, as we had become a democratic and responsible community. Dewey presents an ontology of the cyclical and interactive relationship of experience, learning and reflective thinking, one embedded in deeply somatic and democratic perspectives that support the community's social somatic system of values and understanding of learning. Wenger's ideas support the ensemble in terms of the organizational import

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<sup>42</sup> The initiative is an association of dance makers, producers and networkers who are dedicated to the art of dance with older adults. The aim is to explore and make visible the potentialities for dance art and cultural education with this sector of society. The idea of a network is central so that experiences gained so far will be bundled in the initiative, which can enable encounters both between choreographers and dance and dance theatre ensembles.

<sup>43</sup> Tuckman's (1965) theory of developmental sequencing in small groups: coordinating behaviours (storming), coaching (forming), empowering (norming), supporting (performing) and integration of new members and transforming (adjourning).

of the multifarious manners in which people participate and maintain a community of practice and therein negotiate their identities.

Arendt's ideas reinforce a deep sense of collective authorship, Dewey's life-long learning, and Wenger responsible belonging. These are the two primary conditions for the sustainability of the ArtRose community in dance. Delving into unknown territory harvests from the wealth of past experiences in order to begin anew over and over again, as *Ausdruckstänzer* Mary Wigman reflected, one has both the obligation and the ability 'to have to begin again, but also to be able to begin again' (1963). This is the credo of the *ArtRose* ensemble. Arendt, Dewey, and Wenger put forth not only socio-political but also ethical ideas for being and living in the world. Their social, political, and educational tenets do not directly impact upon the dramaturgy or movement construction of the dance works created in the ArtRose ensemble. However, in following their *leitlinien* conditions the manner in which the ensemble dances, creates performs, and maintains a community together. This thesis continues with an exposition of Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue that endow this research with its philosophical base and draw connection to the community principles of Dewey, Wenger, and Arendt inherent in the work in the *ArtRose* ensemble.

## Chapter 5

### A Philosophy of Dialogue

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Picture 4 *ArtRose* practice

Photo: Schröter

#### 5.1 Introduction

The research of this thesis examines embodied relations in a community in dance, the *ArtRose* ensemble, a transformative corporeality whose dance practice is facilitated by fundamentals of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic learning. As the subject matter of this thesis deals with self-development and realization through relational practice, I have located its philosophical underpinnings in the tradition of the dialogical principle. This deeply humanistic tradition and its literary histories can be traced to the Greek rhetoricians (Perlina 1984, Barth and Krabbe 1982). A defining attribute of the dialogic is '[...] two-way communication uniquely distinguished from other forms by its

inclusivity, respectfulness, and mutual responsiveness of participants, leading to mutual understanding' (Lane and Bartlett 2016: 4075). Therefore, dialogic philosophy, or ethics as first philosophy, is not new but its chronotopics are vast and varied. Historian Tzvetan Todorov writes: 'As is usual in such matters it is not the idea, which is new, but the place it occupies in the system of thought and the consequences to which it leads' (1981:151)<sup>44</sup>.

The specific dialogical viewpoint that propels this research forward is that of Martin Buber's existential and anthropological philosophy that proposes: 'All real living is meeting' (1958: 25). It is a particular kind of meeting in which 'people allow the other to happen to them' (Steward and Zediker 2000: 230). Buber speaks of genuine dialogue as '[...] the existential and ontological reality in which the self comes into being and through which it fulfils and authenticates itself' (Buber 2002: xv). Buber's philosophy investigates how individual consciousness realizes itself in contact with other people and in the material and natural world (Kelb 1991). Meeting in the *ArtRose* ensemble is one of unspoken, felt empathy between members of the ensemble.

'Living Dialogue' is based on the presupposition of the human beings' twofold orientation of communicating. The one is the 'doing', the interaction with one's environment in the pursuit of objective knowledge, a first to third person experience (I-It). The second is 'being'; or entering a potentially transformative dialogue of will and grace, a first to second person encounter, a relation experienced as a polarity whose centre lies in the in between, in which 'one's individual identity unfolds in the world in relation to others' (I-Thou) (Kramer 2003: 138). The first is therefore a dialogic intersubjectivity, and the other is the one of monologist self-consciousness. Buber scholar Pamela Vermes describes: 'We can confront and address that in our lives as 'you'; or we can hold ourselves apart from it and view it as an object, an 'it' (1988: 40).

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<sup>44</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> century continental philosophers that have considered the phenomenon of dialogue from a variety of perspectives, include Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002), Carl Rogers (1902-1987), Emmanuel Levinas (1905-1995), Mikhail Bakhtin (1953-2015), and Martin Buber (1898-1965). Gadamer considers the hermeneutics of the dialogical as mediated by language in which the other is understood as a co-subject (Gill 2015: 9); Rogers investigates dialogical practice as empathic human meeting, both in person-to-person centered encounter and in public discourse (Pearce 2002: x); Levinas' ethics as first philosophy situates the individual's responsibility for the other as primary in a dialogical encounter (Pearce 2002: xii); and Bakhtin's views the dialogic as an inherent characteristic of the social being, as a cultural form of knowing (Shotter 2005).

According to Buber these forms provide the communicative constitution of human existence and condition each other in a dialectical configuration of distancing and encountering. These two distinct yet mutually supportive ways of living in the world provide the ethical foundation of this research. Buber's idea of community is one based on free association of individuals brought together through dialogue created in the living out of relationships through participation in the cooperative networks that form and sustain communities. His definition is precisely the credo that propels the *ArtRose* ensemble forward. The *ArtRose* ensemble is one that fulfils the pragmatic requirements of societal organization, but more importantly addresses how individuals can unite to form a community that can sustain and govern its existence.

This is a position that resides at the interface of individualism and collectivism and is precisely the community dynamic for which *ArtRose* strives. The *ArtRose* community is ongoing and develops through organic processes of transformation that makes it one to be nurtured rather than one that is constructed through the dance specific competencies of its members. This research calls for an ethics of reciprocity and mutual acceptance that can support its communicative channels. As such, Buber's dialogical principle does not remain a theoretical abstraction, but is practiced in our relational dance. Buber does not use the terms embodiment and Somatics. He prioritizes the person's bodily felt experience in the encounter, rather than its analysis (Cissna and Anderson 2002), thus making his propositions both phenomenological and somatic.

Communication in the ensemble fluctuates between the shared responsibilities for the carrying out of the tasks necessary to sustain the ensemble and in the spoken and unspoken moments in dance practice in which genuine dialogue unfolds. Fully immersed in this environment experience, I experience, reflect, and interpret the research, in part, through the bias of an autoethnographic lens. This requires me to remain astutely attentive to my own behaviour in this environment. Buber's ideas, their image, representation, and language speak to me pragmatically, metaphorically, and spiritually and I sense his generosity, compassion, and deep simplicity. Therefore, I feel both compelled and enabled to live out the ethical and humanistic tenets of

Buber's thought. In practice with the ensemble, when unfettered by the constraints of my own ego, I can be drawn into a somatic state of receptiveness and presence and experience moments of inspirited creation, of encounters that Buber describes as 'a stepping into relation, a response to the grace of being met' (Buber, cited in Berry 1985: 66). These are pre-conscious but finely tuned moments in which there are no leaders or followers, no doing the dance, but that of being carried by the rhythms of relational movement, of dwelling in a world that unfolds through encounter. It is Buber's dialogic principle that guides the ethical processes of the *ArtRose* ensemble, in a spirit of valuation, acceptance and confirmation of each of its members.

This chapter offers a succinct biography that places Buber's ideas historically, culturally, and intellectually. It continues with an overview of the development of his thought that includes an excursion into his most cited work, *I and Thou* (1937/1958). Buber's concepts of turning and realms of relation are addressed, as are his positions on ethics and aesthetics. Throughout this chapter interfaces in the thought and methods of Buber and Feldenkrais are made and examples of the influence of Buber's ideas in the practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble are advanced.

## 5.2 Biographical Background

Martin Buber (1878-1965), an Austrian born Jew, classified himself as a philosophical anthropologist, a *Schriftsteller* (writer one who renders scriptures). He is known for bringing Hasidism, 'a kind of natural sacramentality by which nature is penetrated with and by holiness without being violated thereby' (Buber, 1963: 92) into the thought and culture of the western world. He is recognized as a major twentieth-century figure in Jewish thought and in religious philosophy, and one who pointed to the life of dialogue (Kramer 2003: 5; Dew 2018: 625).

Buber enjoyed both a literary and an academic career as writer, editor, teacher, literary and spiritual translator, interpreter, political and social activist. His influence extends across the humanities and his works have shaped an understanding of ethics,

social psychology, arts, education, philosophical anthropology, and social philosophy. Buber's thought not only resonated in intellectual circles but also influenced the political and social climate in Europe and in Israel regarding religiously infused social doctrines (Dew 2018). He envisioned a community of inclusiveness, of understanding and acceptance of cultural, political, and religious differences. This was a polarizing position in his time not unlike the one that engenders limitless discussion in the socio-political environment in the global world today.

Early in his life, Buber joined the utopian, pacifist-socialist movement called the *neue Gemeinschaft*<sup>45/46</sup> (new community). This community aimed to create cooperative living environments dedicated to judicially infused humanitarian idealism and social reform (Buber 1996: 35). Through his involvement in this movement Buber embodied his own idea of the personally responsible social individual (Kramer 2003: 195). Buber's idea of community was based on the free association of individuals brought together through dialogue created in the living out of relationships through participation in the cooperative networks that formed and sustained them. As in the *ArtRose* ensemble he posited that the self is a social and interpersonal being and that a turning towards another invites the possibility to move beneath the 'what' of the act, to perceive its essence. Buber stated that in the absence of community one could not come to grips with the individual self (Schmidt 1995: 10). This statement supports the underlying tenor of the *ArtRose* ensemble, one that strives to acknowledge individual potential and to make this individuality visible in the community.

Buber's life and work espoused intercultural understanding and the commonality of the Judeo-Christian heritage. He worked for the reconciliation between Jewish and

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<sup>45</sup> In 1898 Buber joined the social anarchist Gustav Landauer in this group. It placed the notion of a utopian community, partly in response to Engel's dismissal of this notion, at the centre of importance. This *Gemeinschaft* formed into a neo-romantic writers' group and both Landauer and Buber published about its social philosophy. One of its aims was directed to setting out the possibilities for the development of successful communes (Kibbutz) within the Palestine Mandate, later Israel. Pacifist Landauer was killed in a Munich prison in 1919 for his conviction to build in egalitarian form of community and society.

<sup>46</sup> As a young social Zionist, Feldenkrais migrated on foot from his home in the Ukraine to Palestine to help build the Jewish State. As a laborer, he lived in there in Kibbutz, a 'utopian' form communal living similar to that of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century European communitarian movement (Reese 2015).

Arab people and advanced the call for the creation of a bi-national state. Throughout his life Buber was committed to promoting non-formal adult education and teacher training (Dew 2018: 626). From 1933-38 he directed the *Freies Jüdisches Lehrhaus* (Central Office for Jewish Adult Education) in Frankfurt. After emigrating to Israel in 1938 he established the School for Adult Educators modelled after the Danish pastor and educator, Nikolaj Grundtvig's vision of a school for life-long, experiential learning<sup>47</sup>. This was one of the first examples of adult teacher training<sup>48</sup>. The practice of Buber's thought is precisely relevant for the *ArtRose* community as it revolves around learning, conflict resolution through dialogue, the forming and sustaining of communities, somatic and experientially oriented education, and reciprocal exchange.

### 5.3 Philosophical Background

Buber's interest in Judeo-Christian mysticism,<sup>49</sup> occidental Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism, German Romanticism,<sup>50</sup> Hasidism, cultural Zionism, and existentialism are integral parts that led to the crystallization of his philosophical signature. From the German Christian mystic, Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), Buber sourced the idea that opposites unite without diminishing their opposition. Boehme called this the *Urgrund* or 'primordial will to self-realization, which to know itself must unfold in the process of reality' (Boehme cited in Hudson 2007: 40). This resembles the Kabbalistic and Hasidic

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<sup>47</sup> The common denominator of all Grundtvig's pedagogical efforts was to promote a spirit of freedom, poetry and disciplined creativity, within all branches of educational life. He promoted values such as wisdom, compassion, identification, and equality. He opposed all compulsion, including exams, as deadening to the human soul. A spirit of freedom, cooperation and discovery was to be kindled in individuals, in science, and in the civil society as a whole (Smith, M.K. 2007).

<sup>48</sup> Feldenkrais profited from this education when he arrived as a refugee in the Palestine Mandate in 1919 (Reese 2015).

<sup>49</sup> For some Buber is narrowly classified as a mystic and religious scholar as his oeuvre includes extensive writings on Biblical hermeneutics and a translation of the Bible from Hebrew into a Judaically infused German language interpretation. These interpretative religious texts have little relevancy for this thesis and are therefore not considered.

<sup>50</sup> Specifically, regarding Johann Wolfgang Goethe's writings that speak of pure communion with nature.



ideas that reconcile worldly experience with the immanence and unifying power of the Divine or 'eternal Source of the universe'.

For Buber, the experience of relation and dialogue is the way to grasp the reality of ethical-existential self-understanding. This means that one can meet oneself through the encounter of the alterity of the other. Buber denotes this as philosophical anthropology,<sup>51</sup> one having to do with an investigation of the '*phenomenon of man*' rather than the '*nature of man*'. As a philosophical anthropologist Buber is concerned to explicate and understand human existence as it shows itself in its concrete historicity and cultural variability' (Schrag 1970: 83). This concept is the underlying credo of the *ArtRose* community: knowing oneself in the meeting of another. Glenna Batson reflects that Buber's thought is 'embedded in mutual response and accountability that [...] transcends the ego centric modus of existence and looks towards a blended bonding with humanity, nature, animate beings and other powers of expanding consciousness with openness, confirmation and acceptance' (2014: 226). My engagement with the *ArtRose* ensemble strives to establish pathways of communication and interaction that support reciprocity, reflective learning, and acceptance of alterity. Our entire practice and performance are built upon the credo of relation and dialogue. The import and the dramaturgy of the piece, *Mut und Gnade* investigates mutual response and accountability according to Buberian ethics. For example, a scene in this work puts four dancers in a situation in which they are dancing in modus of giving and accepting weight in close connection to one another in a condensed and linear trajectory that is directed to a spatial goal. The dancer's transverse this pathway - individually in relation – giving and accepting the weight of parts of themselves to each other without compromising their own intention to arrive at the destination but knowing that their pathway to the intended goal was determined by the interrelation of the dancers. This scene, as many others in the work,

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<sup>51</sup> Inquiry since antiquity has been concerned with existential questions of human existence; however, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century brought with it a shift in the perspectives of this query. Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century philosopher, Max Scheler reflects: 'We are the first generation in which man has become fully and thoroughly 'problematic' to himself; in which he no longer knows what he essentially is, but at the same time knows that he does not know'(1945: 307).

*Mut und Gnade*, reflect is an example of self-revelation through the experience with another. This manner of acceptance, reliability, and trust in the 'other(s)' is a fundamental component of our work.

#### 5.4 Buber's Dialogical Principle, *I and Thou*

Buber's philosophy of dialogue came to its fullest expression in the brief treatise, *I and Thou* (2010). This piece has been described as '[a] set of mediations on the significance of the immediate presence of God [the Divine, eternal Source, presence, or *presentness*] in dialogic relations between persons' and other animate beings (Lipari 2004: 4). *I and Thou* is at once a philosophical and a theological work (Ashman and Lawler 2008: 261); however, as is the case in this thesis, its philosophical ideas can be appreciated and applied independent of its theology<sup>52</sup>.

The *I and Thou* configuration proposes that the individual is a fact of existence insofar as she steps into a living relationship with others. Buber states, '[...] all real living is meeting' (2010: 11). The gratuitous nature of Buberian relation unfolds in a common centre, 'the between', in which each participant retains her distinctiveness (Gordon 1999: 262). The power for personal renewal and transformation or moments of felt wholeness spring from an encounter of finding without seeking, of paradoxical intentionality and reciprocity, of relation devoid of imposition. The tenets of Feldenkrais and Dewey fundamentally transmit the same message of presence, of receptivity of that what is. Therefore, the ideas of Feldenkrais, Dewey, Buber, and Arendt build an integrative and coherent foundation for the investigations of this thesis.

Buber's dialogic is built upon the dynamic intersection of two primary word pairs: *I-It* and *I-Thou*. The two basic modes of inter-relational attitudes that Buber proposes are *erscheinen* (doing, *I-It*) und *sein* (being, *I-Thou*) (2010). He speaks of the *individual* in

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<sup>52</sup> Buber names the eternal *Thou* 'God' or the Divine source in *I and Thou*. In his later works Buber changes his semantics, replacing God with terms as – the eternal Source, presence and *presentness*. This change extracts the religious doctrinism from his ideas.

the *I-It* constellation as one who experiences subjective relations to things (*Verhältnis*); and of the *person* in the *I-Thou* context as one who encounters mutuality in relation (*Beziehung*), meaning a relation that releases the preoccupation with one's own subject in the world of private experience to be open to encounter the *other* (Kramer 2003).

The *I-It* addresses the world of individual, subjective experience; the ordering of objects and events in relation to one another. It is a utilitarian, goal-oriented and essential part of life. Buber's *I-It* exists primarily for the objective benefit and development of individual singularity, understood as a network of moments embedded in the contexts passing between past, present, and future (Berry 1985) *I-It* relations are those in which the means leads to an end. The *I-Thou* relation involves an egalitarian character that accounts for both one's own individualism and the radical otherness, experienced in the relational space of encounter (Buber 1965: 241). Within *I-Thou* relations, the *I* is not sensed as enclosed and singular, but is present, open to, and inclusive towards, the alterity of the other (Avnon 1998: 39).

Buber speaks of the narrow ridge whereupon both the *I-It* and *I-Thou* reside and posits that the only certainty is 'the certainty of meeting what remains undisclosed' (1947: 184). The emergence of a dialogic relation is influenced by the capacity of each person to recognise, to acknowledge, and to remain present to the difference of self and other without imposing one's own opinion or giving up one's own ground (Buber 1958). 'Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency, nor can it ever take place without me. I become through my relation to the *Thou*; and as I become the *I*, I say *Thou*' (Buber 2010: 28). Indeed, the transformative experience of an *I-Thou* encounter implies that one is not separate from the experience – but is the experience (Corbett 2007: 35).

The common centre of the *Thou* is that of physical sensation and its ensuing action of self-surrender that springs from inhabiting one's own presence while at the same time stepping out of oneself in the confirmation of the other (Kramer 2003: 126). For Buber *presence or presentness* is not 'the abstract point between past and future, [but] it is

the present of intensity and wholeness [and] exists only insofar as meeting and relation exist' (2010: 58). One cannot be present when one is involved in one's own feelings; for example, how you 'feel' about the other or how the other might 'feel' about you. The reciprocity of encounter of which Buber speaks is not the same as an expression of empathy. The act of mutuality precludes what the other is feeling, thinking, and experiencing without giving up the felt reality of one's own individual activity. The *I-Thou* relation points beyond the meeting. It is a numinous experience, which calls one to transcend one's present state of being through the creative action of making the other present. This requires the simultaneity of expanding into one's own being whilst simultaneously turning to encounter the other.

Living Buber's philosophy in the *ArtRose* community places full responsibility on the individual to expand in oneself to meet the other. The shared dance between members of *ArtRose* can proceed in both attentive, embodied, and reciprocal dialogue, in the silence of the movement. Dancing together we experience the fluctuation between the doing and being. Moments of genuine dialogue emerge unannounced, singular, in a duet, or group form, when the quality of attention has been cultivated so that ego or conscious mind can release its will to impose, or to create a situation. Becoming more sensitive to oneself invites a presence to fill our beings expressed in a state of grace with another.

## 5.5 Turning

The idea of 'turning' stands at the centre of the Jewish conception of the way of man (Buber 1965: 2). In the German language the word for turning is *Umkehr* or *Umkehrbarkeit*, literally translated as reversibility. This means not a turning around, or a turning over, but the reversibility of perspective. In Buber's dialogic life proceeds in fluid alteration between the realm of objectification, the *It* and the realm of the subjectification of the inborn *Thou*, a 'turning' that allows every *It* to be taken into the realm of the *Thou* and back again (Berry 1985). For Feldenkrais reversibility or *Umkehrbarkeit* implies the turning from actuality and latency and suggests the

inevitability that prevents every relation from being preserved in time and space. The meeting in dialogue, neither universal nor idealistic, is situated in a concrete moment in time.<sup>53</sup> At the moment one experiences the *Thou* as a person with qualities that can be appreciated separately, meaning that the *Thou* becomes an object of one's *It*, the evanescent *I-Thou* relationship disappears. Buber's writes, 'I do not experience the man to whom I say *Thou*. [...] But I take my stand in relation to him, in the sanctity of the primary word. Only when I step out of it do I experience him once more' (2010: 9). Philosopher Erin Manning articulates a similar idea to Buber's turning: 'Ontologies must remain thresholds, from being to becoming, from force to form to force. Identities do not take form, but these are always brief individuations' (2012: 10). She continues: 'If we lose the intensity of force taking form, what we have first and foremost is a step' (2012: 35). This idea of reversibility as expressed by both Manning and Buber is one that is performatively experienced in the *ArtRose* ensemble. The dancer, Wilhelma, turned for 4. 5 minutes in a trance-like state. This turning produced a changing of perspective, a constant reorientation for the spectator. The sub-text of this scene was the rolling of a group of women on the floor with a male dancer navigating his way through the rolling motion. He constant turning motion brought the audience into a state of ambiguity, and a confrontation with a constantly changing perspectives, of choice or indecision.

## 5.6 Spheres of Relation

The movement of turning relates to how Buber places this parity in three spheres of encounter: The unspoken relations between humans and nature; the spoken and silent relations between human beings; and the meeting beyond speech of human beings and spirit becoming forms, *inspiredness* (Gordon 1999: 59, Kramer 2003: 187).

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<sup>53</sup> This is different than in some forms of mysticism and eastern religions. For example, the telos of the absorptionism of Buddhism is that the human life can remain in a state that takes one out of normal life (Putnam 2005: 66).

Relation is therefore not conditioned by the nature of the being, but by the way in which one relates to that being (Yaron 1993: 136). Buber states, 'Nature too moves towards us even in the most extreme motionlessness; it has to do with us' (2010: 36). His thought expounds both humanistic, mystic, and new materialistic concepts<sup>54</sup>; thereby placing it distinctly in the present. Buber's ideas move away from an anthropocentric viewpoint to emphasise the dense interconnectedness between humans and other forms of matter and thereby deconstruct the binary between cultural and natural to show how all things have the capacity 'to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle' (Bennett 2010: 6).

Mutuality with nature is not to personalize the other living being but speaks to the personalizing that happens to the human being in the encounter (Berry 1985: 37).

Buber recognizes the *inspiredness* in all life and the possibility for reciprocal encounter. In his dialogical spheres of encounter, a genuine meeting cannot come about from one side alone but rather must occur in variant degrees of reciprocity. Buber speaks that mutuality occurs because all living beings have 'an instinct for communion', 'a tender surface of personal life which longs for contact with other life' (Buber 1965: 88, 201). Community and the singular are necessary for each another; however, Buber stresses that genuine belonging includes the 'experience of the limits of this belonging [...] an experience that escapes definitive formulation' (Buber 1951: 241 quoted in Habermas 2015: 19). Relation needs its conceptual antipode, distance. Relation takes place by setting people, things, spiritual beings at a distance in order to secure the otherness without which there can be no relation. The confirmation of the *I* mediated by the other who confirms one both at a distance and in relation. Buber stresses that dialogue is at once the extension of the *I* that enables the *I* to encounter another, that of making another present. This is an act of response and responsibility meaning that in relation one can adopt the perspective of the other and can be the interlocutor of the other being (Habermas 2015: 11). The dialogical experience is not a mystical all-encompassing

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<sup>54</sup> In this sense Buber's dialogic has similarities with the ideas of contemporary anthropological philosopher, Tim Ingold who argues that human beings are simultaneously constituted both as organisms within systems of ecological relations, and as persons within systems of social relations (2000).

divinity but an ontic or 'real experience' between beings in the pulsating life in the world. Fundamentally the work *Mut und Gnade* revolves around developing qualities of kinaesthetic listening both in oneself and in relation with oneself and with others. The first scene is concerned with everyone's ability to evoke and dance out, each along her individual pathway, memories of experiences to release them to make space for the new. The dramaturgy unfolds in a dance of relation – trios, quartets, and groups – traveling along shared linear pathways in a dance that shares different perspective of a similar idea, of bodies changing orientations, tempi, of sharing both contact and the awareness of the spaces in-between. These scenes, specifically the scenes 3-5 are examples of *leadingfollowing*, of listening and anticipating and intuiting the response of others so that one can meet in Buberian relation to be carried in a spirit of reciprocity.

As the relational processes of dialogue involve acceptance and confirmation of alterity in the response of two parties, attempt of dialogue may engender mismeetings that neither accept nor confirm the other. Buber refers to this quality of exchange as a monologue disguised as dialogue (Avnon 1998). The final scene of the dance, *Mut und Gnade*, involved the entire group engaged in a dance of unison, of set patterns of movement danced in concert with one another in clearly measured time. Some of the performers as well as some of the audience members experienced this scene as one that Buber describes as a mismeeting, of individual monologues performed in a shared space. The experience dancing together with antenna like awareness dissapate4s as the dancers where concentrated on executing the steps in the given time. Dancers' awareness and dialogue with one another became tunnel like – with contained rather than porous physical boundaries. However, according to Buber, it is often through the discomfort of conflict and mismeetings that clarification for the 'how and 'what' that is beneficial for the group is revealed. Both Buber, Dewey and Arendt speak of mismeeting and conflict as necessary parts of life and living in community. Meetings and mismeetings transpire in the *ArtRose* ensemble both in practice, performance and in administrative matters in the community and are mediated through the ethical, democratic, and practical strategies offered by Feldenkrais, Dewey, Buber, and Arendt.

We accept our mismeetings and accept and see how they can lead to individual and collective transformation in the future.

## 5.7 Art and Aesthetics

The sphere of encounter that probes dialogue in relation to art and aesthetics is that *inspiredness* or spirit becoming forms, a creative process of turning one's attention to the disclosure and discovery of a work of art that brings its conception into realization (Friedman 2012: 170-173). As is stated in previous sections in this chapter, Buber proposes that the *between* rather than the *within* is the locus of all creative activities (Friedman 2012). The imagination of the artist is in its essence a process of discovery, an encounter with the artist and the material in which the artefact is revealed. The dialogic process is therefore a living *Gestalt*, in which form is revealed to the artist as it unfolds. Buber writes: 'As I actualize, I uncover' (2010: 41). Sheets-Johnstone places this idea into the realm of dance with her statement:

The dancer [...] is bringing the choreography to life through the movement that flows dynamically in, through and from his/her body. Accordingly, he or she is not simply moving through a choreographed form-going through the motions, as it were; the form is moving through him or her (2013: 5-6).

Reflecting upon a transformational experience while performing an evening length solo at the Mousonturm Theatre in Frankfurt, I remember the simultaneity of 'being and doing' as I was living the dance, neither dictate of my own will nor that of the physical fulfilment of the form. I did not dance the dance, nor did the dance propel me. At this moment, the creative act unfolded in the reciprocity of dance and dancer. This experience substantiated for me Buber's proposals that reception, attention, and presence allow that what can be, to unfold.

At times, my experience dancing with members of the *ArtRose* ensemble brings forth the experience of being carried forth by the dance. The question of spirituality in this thesis is identified by Buber as *inspiredness*, a condition that connects two or more people whose dance unfolds in unspoken dialogue of being. Therefore, the sense of



coming into relation in the *ArtRose* practice is an expression of personal spirituality or *inspiritedness*.

The ethics of the turning motion of Buber's *I-It* and *I-Thou* dialectic guide the way the members of *ArtRose* relate with one another. We all experience the objectification of dealing with the daily affairs of the ensemble and experience moments of what Buber calls *inspiritedness*, or *spirit finding form* while dancing together and at moments before an audience. We do not strive for consensus or sameness, differences are welcome. Actions are taken in recognition of both self-responsibility and for the consequences these actions may have for the community. At times decisions are taken and choices are made that are unfavourable for individuals in the group. In fact, the communicative procedures that accommodate each person's voice, significantly extend the timeline for the making of a dance. However, acknowledging and learning from the consequences of all decisions keeps our dialogue, mediated by the permission to be what we are, and the confirmation of the difference of others, open to a meeting in acceptance and valuation of the others that can lead to the experiencing the locus of value inside oneself. Living Buber's philosophy in the *ArtRose* community places full responsibility on the individual to expand in oneself in order to meet the other.

'Living Dialogue' does not need the spoken word to find its reality. Attentive silence recognizes the eternal silent background of being and dialogue (Avnon, 1998: 33). Therefore, silence can be appreciated as the welcoming acceptance of the other. The shared dance between members of *ArtRose* proceeds in attentive, embodied, and reciprocal dialogue, in the silence of the movement. Dancing together we experience the fluctuation between the doing and being. Moments of genuine dialogue emerge unannounced singularly, in a duo, or group when the quality of attention has been cultivated so that ego or conscious mind can release its will to impose or to create a situation. Becoming more sensitive to ourselves allows a presence to fill our beings that finds its expression in a state of grace with another. My own researcher notes taken after a weekly session with the ensemble relate my experience to Buber's dialogic:

Sharing a physical meditation of dialogue, breathing with the body-worlding, I shed notions of valuation and judgement; follow tracks unforeseen in an undefended space of bodies forming and moving from feelings, from thoughts. Residing in a relational practice of becoming, unfettered by the constraints of my own ego, I am invited to experience a fullness of presence, of dwelling, without forfeiting my own direction, allowing that what is to shine (2019).

For Buber, the perpetual turning between expansion and distancing is one that implies elasticity. The expansion in oneself and the turning to another with trust and commitment invites the numinous or grace to enter the dance. Erin Manning so eloquently states: 'Grace is the becoming dance of the step, when walking flows in the between of directions where holes become emergent openings rather than missed opportunities' (2010: 30). These are moments of movement carried by the rhythms of relation. 'The essence of relational movement is the creation of a virtual node, an in-between that propels the dance, that in-forms the grace that is not strictly of the body but of movement itself' (Manning 2012: 31).

The practical submission of this thesis; the dance *Mut und Gnade* dealt with grace of relational practice. Its improvisational score provided the temporal and spatial conditions for the dancers to enter and to dwell in the communicative place of the in-between, enabling relations to unfold unoppressed, with commitment, awareness, trust, and pleasure. The quality of being and dancing together rather than the actual executed movements endowed the performance with its communicative import. Coming into relation quietened uncertainties surrounding the performative situation that supported the performers to move beneath the doing of the performance, to the essence of encounter. These were unprotected encounters of dialogical being. I know as a performer that genuine moments of *I-Thou* encounter transpired during these performances before a 'listening' public. The energy of our presence brought forth form; embodied communication transpired in the world that we were creating in-the-between, cultivating presence and embodied awareness.

Will and grace are election and electing, active and passive. The spiritual is the coming to wholeness and actuality in the here and now of a moment within oneself, being with ones inborn *Thou* facilitated by an *I-Thou* relationship of spontaneous mutuality,

the movement of turning to another. One finds within oneself the sensitivity to detect genuine relation with other(s) and then the courage to act in relation both in pairs and in a group. Transformation begets from the struggle and conflict that arises from identifying with both sides, in which things and persons 'neither exist in rigid separation, nor melt into one another, but reciprocally condition themselves' (Buber 1901: 253). Somatic scholars propose that somatic sensitivity dwells in the individual in relation to other(s) and manifests itself at the junction of possibility and reality (Williamson 2016, Eddy 2014, Kampe 2015). The improvisational practice of *ArtRose* inspired by the spirit of Buber's dialectic, somatic and phenomenological methodology, helps the ensemble members to dwell in sentient, receptive and intuitive bodies, of presence – transitional and fleeting - of self-realization facilitated by an encounter of silent dialogue, as in community one realizes oneself (Buber 2010).

## **5.8 Synergies between Buber's Dialogic and the Feldenkrais Method®**

The philosophy, methodology and citizenship of Martin Buber and Moshé Feldenkrais are embedded in the Hasidic tradition, in phenomenology, and in Somatics. They both accord primacy to the direction and orientation of the sentient body. Though their semantics differ, their viewpoints are phenomenological as they accept, appreciate, and investigate that what manifests itself. Their positions are inherently somatic as they rely on the felt sense and recognize that bodily experience and the body in motion - sensation, perception, and imagination- are requisites for self-knowledge and for living with ethical consciousness in the world (Friedman 2012, Rywerant 1983). Both men locate ethics with acceptance of alterity and in the conditionality of right and wrong.

For Buber, value is determined through confirmation, a non-judgmental stance of affirmation, inclusion or *presentness* in which one can accept multiple viewpoints. Based on the ontological reality of life and exchange between people, the idea is to allow the presence of the other to emerge without imposing one's own truth (Buber 1954: 595). Witnessing the other, experiencing the relationship from the side of the

other, is the key to the ethical *I-Thou* implications of Buber's dialogue. Therefore, the cleft between subjective moral autonomy and objective moral imperatives are not separate. Ontology, epistemology, and ethics are intertwined and revealed through relation. This idea speaks of a treatment of full humanity as the spontaneous unfolding of presence in oneself and in the other.

Feldenkrais shared an ethical perspective like Buber's that looked beyond individual self-improvement toward a vision of society in which all people could flourish, and humanity evolve (Reese 1985: xxxiv). In the one-to-one lessons in the Feldenkrais Method®, the connection of two nervous systems can lead to a dialogue of inspiredness, of mutual understanding, without the spoken word. These implications point to human responsibility to cultivate both address from without and free response from within, a genuine listening and a responsible responding. Philosopher Eliseo Vivas reiterates these thoughts as he writes that one searches for the right balance of forces of distinction between obedience to something objective and obedience to what one desires, or to the obedience to self. 'The ideal, of course, or moral education is that the distinction be totally erased' (1950: 239). This is exactly what Buber proposes in his relational dialectic. In an *I-Thou* encounter the distinction of which Vivas speaks is not present, as the essence of the *I-Thou* relation obliterates this dichotomy.

The methods of Feldenkrais and Buber affirm individual potential, natural proclivities, and singularity (Rywerent 1983: 19). This fact makes their methods formative rather than manipulative. Buber emphasises that things and people exist independent of a goal. Therefore, genuine dialogue is not generated out of purpose, imposition, or control. Relation cannot be expected or demanded; rather, it is an act of will and grace. Practicing the Feldenkrais Method®, one is invited to engage with an attitude of openness, to initiate and to move from intention without a pre-determined goal, or defined purpose.

Self-questioning propels one forward in a process of discovery. Both Buber's and Feldenkrais' history located in the Hasidic tradition, is one that deconstructs the joyful

observance of ethical and responsible living into four worlds: action, emotion, intellect, and spirit (Kaetz 2007). Buber's two-fold concept of relating in the world is the oscillation between doing and being, between action and thinking, sensing, and feeling (Kramer 2003: 56). Similarly, Feldenkrais understands consciousness and learning as the interaction between action, feeling, thinking, and sensing rooted in the awareness of one's movement in the gravitational field (Feldenkrais 1972: 10). The similarities are evident. Both positions are concerned with dealing with the quotidian world, in which the spiritual stands not in opposition to the secular, but rather as a part of it (Berry 1985). Embracing the singular and extraordinary in everyday life finds its resonance in Feldenkrais' last publication, *The Elusive Obvious* that 'deals with simple, fundamental notions of daily life that through habit become elusive' (Feldenkrais 1981: iii). To notice and to act upon the preciousness and *presentness* in moments of the everyday mundane are ones, which often escape our awareness but are fundamental for being and doing in the world. In this sense, the presence within is also the divine beyond (Hudson 2007: 36), a world in which one can encounter 'the grace that appears ever anew in earthly material' (Buber 2010: 17).

Though Feldenkrais stressed that he was not a religious man and his semantics do not include the words – God, or Divine, or eternal Source- both he and Buber contend that the essence of life is grounded in how one meets one's own existence, predicated upon the possibility to engage in the world with openness, mutuality, and directness (Kaetz 2007).

'Turning' for Buber and 'reversibility' for Feldenkrais work with this concept in ways that encourage adaptability, receptivity, intuition, and resilience in dealing with the factors of life. For Buber, the continual turning from *I-It* experiences to *I-Thou* relations infuses the objectification of daily life with moments of transformational encounter. This turning can bring tranquillity to the directions one takes and thereby support one to act with ethical responsibility in the world (Buber 2010). For Feldenkrais, reversibility, can be seen from the perspective of muscular activity; the ability to stop, reverse or change the direction of one's movement to not only improve the fluidity of motion but also to increase adaptability and resilience in coping with the factors of life.

The ethical connotations of reversibility in the Feldenkrais Method, as Buber's turning, support the person to recognize the value of multiple perspectives. The ability to discern differences and to make distinctions is what gives the person the clarity of direction necessary for informed, responsible, or what Feldenkrais terms, *mature behaviour*. Feldenkrais speaks about direction in and through the body, into space and between people. Direction is as an action that opens a world of multifarious possibilities for variations, permutations, orientations, or choice. Buber projects the challenge of responsible action as dependent upon three principles: The principle of thought, the principle of speech, and the principle of action. Reiterated from a previous place in his chapter Buber states: 'The origin of all conflict between me and my fellow men is that I do not say what I mean, and I don't do what I say' (2010: 22). Comparably Feldenkrais remarks: [...] 'as we become aware of what we are doing in fact, and not what we say or think what we are doing, the way to improvement is wide open to us' (1964). Mature or ethical behaviour is for Feldenkrais the oscillation between the doing and the conscious reflection of action. This condition allows one to sharpen the ability to effectively decipher the nature of motivation and modulate the dynamics of actions freed from the dependency of compulsive behaviour to generate, internalize, and act with intentionally focused direction (Coogan 2016: 32).

For both Buber and Feldenkrais, the embodiment of perception and imagination are expressed through the dynamics of body in motion. Creation exists in the unpredictable engagement with presence, which is fullness of bodymind (Buber 2010: 41). Presence in the sentient body is 'knowing,' and thus phenomenologically can be understood as prerequisite for an *I-Thou* encounter. The objective reality of the body provides orientation for engagement with and within the world around.

The field of action of both Buber's 'Living Dialogue' as Feldenkrais' method of somatic learning is the movement of everyday life. Both positions point towards the spiritual pragmatism of the ordinary. The Feldenkrais practitioner celebrates with awe the multifarious possibilities to enact quotidian movement patterns and engages with curiosity to discover novelty in mindful repetition. Buber's thought hallows the extraordinariness and repetitive rituals of the everyday. The dance practice of *ArtRose*

addresses the simplicity and at once the expressivity of everyday gesture and movement, in its unfolding in the ease of the moment. The practice and performance of the *ArtRose* ensemble makes visible the ideas of Feldenkrais and Buber. The things and beings in the world offer occasion and possibilities for relation in everyday kinds of fashion. True dialogue need not be framed in the exceptional. The forming of self-identity is facilitated only in relation to all things and beings with which one has to do, and whose otherness persists in each caring environment (Berry 1985: 38). Feldenkrais proposes that in moments of awareness one can '[...] grasp that his small world and the great world around are but one, and that in this unity he is no longer alone' (1972: 54).

Language helps the individual to locate intentional action and reside in the presence of the moment. Buber's language invites a poetic mode of being into the world. Language in a group lesson in the Feldenkrais method uses language that is directive, conditional and suggestive. In the silent encounter of a one-to-one lesson in the Feldenkrais Method®, as in moments of *ArtRose's* dance, a deep quiet resonates in the space that allows two central nervous systems to link. Each person pays attention to what is present in the moment and discerns its peculiarity. This direct contact is about personal relation, not about personality. It can thus be an *I-Thou* moment of relation. Feldenkrais writes: 'These hands sense at the same time as they direct. When touching I seek nothing from the person I touch' (1981: 4). Buber and Feldenkrais address the dialectic of unity and duality as relational, expansion and distancing, yielding, and resisting (Habermas 2015, Kaetz 2007) that endow a unique potentiality of each person to find anew the clarity of direction that leads to self-realization and accountable action in the world.

## 5.9 Closing Remarks

The nature of Buber's world picture reduced to the two properties of *I-It* and *I-Thou* has been criticized for its simplicity<sup>55</sup> (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy 2004). However, simplicity can be deceptive, as the simple probing beneath the surface can reveal profundity. Buber's overtly simple construct of a 'Living Dialogue' opens a realm that deeply probes existential concerns of human existence. The dialogical principle of reciprocity proposes an idea of unity in duality, in which polarities do not necessarily mean opposites. Oppositions unite without diminishing either their opposition or their differences; they do not forgo either their individuality or the experience of merging (Putnam 2005: 138). According to the logical conception of truth only one of two contraries can be true, but in the reality of life as one lives it, these polarities are inseparable. Buber posits that 'the unity of the contraries is the mystery at the innermost core of the dialogue (1948: 17).

Critical commentary has been voiced about the conflict between Buber's ideas and their practical applications, as it is often interpreted as one of dyadic relations (Habermas 2015: 13). The question arises how the translation of *I-Thou*, a proposal apparently based on the meeting of two beings can be realized in the greater community or society (Buber 1966: 75)? However, for Buber, community is the return to the primary way of addressing each other in the *I-Thou* modus (Berry 1985: 25), as the cultivation of one's interior life happens with and through the community (Kramer 2003: 90, Cissna and Anderson 2002: 190). Address need not take place in the privacy of the pairing but can also unfold as with the *ArtRose* ensemble in both group practice and before a public in performance<sup>56</sup>.

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<sup>55</sup> Critics claim that his self-searching attitude on war and peace, and his suggestive but elusive utopian political programs of a bi-national solution to the intractable Arab-Jewish conflict fell short of making a definitive contribution to the socio-political of the time (Habermas 2015: 9).

<sup>56</sup> For most of his life Buber professed the impossibility for genuine dialogue in the public sphere as he believed that one was always influenced, consciously and unconsciously, by those listening to the dialogue. However, Buber retracted this attitude after a conversation with Carl Rogers in 1957 that took place before an audience. He expressed that this meeting was indeed one of presence, an *I-Thou* encounter, thereby recognizing the possibility for dialogue - spontaneous, immediate, unreserved – before a public of interested listeners (Buber 1966: 156-174).



Critical comparisons have been made between Buber's ethics as first philosophy and that of his contemporary, Emmanuel Levinas. An asymmetrical subordination defines Levinas' relational philosophy as it locates the true meaning of subjectivity in selfless devotion to the other; as one that disrupts the self's presumed 'right of being' in giving priority to the other, who is always presumed to be always already *above* oneself (Lipari 2004: 226). Therefore, an asymmetrical subordination defines Levinas' relational philosophy (Lipari 2004: 226). Critics suggest that Buber's resistance of obligation to the other (Bergman & Gerstein 1991), contains an unconscious assertion of oneself over the other (Berry 1985). As Buber's *I-Thou* encounter demands a subjective condition free of narcissism in order to fully accept and confirm the alterity of the other so that dominance does not prevail, (Friedman 1965: 198), critics argue that this condition is practically impossible to achieve (Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy 2004). Buber does address the potential of covert egoism in that he distinguishes the egotistical subject of the instrumental *I-It* relation from the subjectivity of the person in the *I-Thou* encounter (Lipari 2004: 228). For Buber, the process of listening - of reception, attention, and presence to the other and through the concomitant reunification of attempts to master, change or control the other imply responsibility not only for oneself but also for the other (Lipari 2004: 231). In his own words Buber states: 'To endure revelation is to endure this moment full of possible decisions, to respond to and be responsible for every moment' (2010: 7).

Living dialogue means just that, living the interconnectedness of oneself with the world; a spiritual expression of making another present as a process of coming closer to oneself. This form of the dialogic principle is what powers the ethos of *ArtRose* forward and challenges me as researcher-participant to temper the communicative processes in the group in a way that permits each of us to feel, accept and perform our beings in their becoming's, through spoken and unspoken dialogue. Chapters 6 continues with an unfolding of the Feldenkrais Method® and discloses its principles,

methods, and strategies in their interaction with the dance, dance making and dance performance in the *ArtRose*, community in dance.

## Chapter 6

### The Feldenkrais Method® of Somatic Learning



Picture 5 *ArtRose* practice

Photo: Brückner

#### 6.1 Introduction

The way people learn, and form habits is a central concern in the Feldenkrais Method®, an embodied, inter-subjective and emancipatory system of discovery through movement. It employs functionally based processes of explorations in movement and visualization, differentiation, and integration, (re)enaction of movement with permutations and variations, and a focus on self-awareness as a means to elicit behaviour that may lead to unexpected modes of thinking, feeling, and action (Coogan 2016, Beringer 2010). For Feldenkrais, freedom means having alternative modes of action available so that one can choose and act upon that one most desired (Reese

2015: 45). Feldenkrais states that freedom of choice accrues only through conscious efforts (2010). Thus, the moment of taking and acting upon an informed choice can be regarded as an exercise of freedom (Beringer 2010: 206).

Moshé Feldenkrais (1904-1994) was an integrative thinker, scientist, and athlete. His life was shaped by intimate and astute self-observation, transdisciplinary scholarship, expert Judo practice, and an insatiable drive for self-development (Reese 2015).

Feldenkrais dealt with the strains of adversity, both cultural and political, displacement and physical injury throughout his life. Over the course of forty years, he created a method in response to his own biography and in dialogue with other twentieth-century non-dualistic systems of somatic movement education and practice (Coogan 2016).

I became certified as a Feldenkrais practitioner in 2001 after successfully completing a four-year professional training program<sup>57</sup>. Learning with the Feldenkrais Method® continues to be for me deeply satisfying and transformational. It is my learning field and the field of my creativity. The more I uncover in myself, the better equipped I am to act in the world with responsibility, compassion, and choice. The systematic of the method appeals to me as it starts from wherever the practitioner chooses to begin. Its strategies invite the practitioner to engage with the verbal or haptic directives in one's own individualized manner and pace. Thus, the practice of the Feldenkrais Method® is self-regulatory. I am aware that my facilitation of the method offers those with whom I am engaging my personal interpretation of this work. I do strive to adhere to the tenets of the referential person, Moshé Feldenkrais whilst allowing myself the freedom to depart from an exact rendering so as to respect and act upon my own sensations. Fundamental principles of this method, its modes of transmission, and its philosophy of learning and living in the world are the threads that weave this thesis into a cohesive whole and offer the scaffolding for the practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble.

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<sup>57</sup> As described in Chapter 1, my first encounters with somatic practices were with Ideokinesis, and the Alexander Technique during my student years at the Juilliard School in New York City (1977-1981). Living and working as a dance professional over the course of the past forty years, I have experienced in greater and lesser degree many somatic practices including the Feldenkrais Method®, Body Mind Centering, Eutony, Laban-Barteneiff, Trager Method, Skinner Releasing and Yoga.

This chapter begins with a brief biography of Feldenkrais that draws connections to the tenets of his system that demonstrate the inseparability of his life journey with the method that he created. A brief overview of somatic learning follows. The main section of this chapter describes the principles of the Feldenkrais Method®, its core concepts and modalities of practice. Interpretations of this method in the practice of the *ArtRose* community in dance are offered.

## **6.2 Moshé Feldenkrais, a Short Biography**

In common with other visionaries as, Dewey, Buber, and Arendt who tenets provide the theoretical, philosophical, and practical backbone of this thesis, Feldenkrais shared an ethical perspective that looked beyond individual self-improvement toward a vision of society in which all individuals could flourish and humanity evolve (Reese 1985: xxxiv). Born into a Jewish family in 1904 Feldenkrais lived for the first years of his life in Slawuta, Russia, now a part of Ukraine. Fleeing unrest and upheaval in the aftermath of World War I and anti-Jewish persecution and pogroms, he travelled alone and at times with groups of people to the British mandate Palestine<sup>58</sup>, where he completed secondary school, worked as a surveyor and autodidact in jujitsu, or the ‘art of yielding.’

After receiving a PhD in mechanical engineering in France, Feldenkrais worked in atomic fission, magnetism, and ultrasound (Kaetz 2007). There he became one of the first Westerners to earn a second-degree black belt in Judo. Teachings of moral nonviolence, resilience, and adaptability, espoused in the martial art forms of both jujitsu and judo, guided Feldenkrais throughout his life (Reese 1985).

Escaping the Nazi invasion of Paris in 1940, Feldenkrais fled to Scotland, where he worked for the British Admiralty in anti-submarine research. While stationed on a submarine, his chronic knee injury resurfaced. To cope with this situation, Feldenkrais

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<sup>58</sup> He completed his secondary school education in a school based in Grundtvig’s ideas of a folk high school, like the one Martin Buber opened and directed in Tel Aviv in 1949.

began a process of self-observation and experimentation that led to his discoveries in movement (re)education. His many interactions with somatic movement pioneers, such as Gerda Alexander (1908-1994), F. M. Alexander (1869-1955), and Heinrich Jacoby (1889-1964), the neurophysiologist Charles Sherrington (1857-1952), and later with scientists and psychologists, including Milton Erickson (1901-1980), Gregory Bateson (1904-1980), Heinz von Foerster (1911-2002), and Karl Pribram (1919-2015), demonstrate the circuitous, transdisciplinary route that led to the crystallization of his method.

In 1951, Feldenkrais returned to the newly founded state of Israel<sup>59</sup> and devoted himself to the practice and dissemination of his method. He taught extensively in Israel, Europe, and North America, and directed professional training programs in Tel Aviv (1969-71), San Francisco (1975-77), and Amherst (1980-83). Hundreds of hours of lessons in his method recorded in audio and video document his teaching legacy. Today professional teacher-training programs are offered around the globe. Feldenkrais' publications are scholarly, albeit they abound with anecdotes and humour and offer practical exercises. Feldenkrais proposed that 'when you have a theory, then your experience teaches and qualifies your understanding and your future experience. That's how science works' (2010: 204). This statement of Feldenkrais echoes that of Dewey's: 'There is no theory in the abstract' ([1916] 2008). An underlying axiom of his method proposes: 'We are that what we make ourselves, and not what circumstances make us' (quoted in Reese 2015: 19). His life work illuminates the interplay of scientific enquiry and enquiry into experience itself. Phenomenologist and Feldenkrais practitioner Sondra Fraleigh describes his method as a phenomenology of action (2015). After suffering a stroke Feldenkrais withdrew from public teaching in 1981 and died three years later in Tel Aviv.

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<sup>59</sup> The British Mandate Palestine was formed into the state of Israel in 1948.

### 6.3 A Sketch of Somatic Learning in Dance

As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis in the Anglosphere somatic informed dance education and practice harvest from the inquiries dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in Modern Dance, *Ausdruckstanz*, holistic gymnastics the *Lebensreform* movement and Asian thought (Jeschke and Vettermann 2000, Eddy 2015, Myers 1983). Somatic informed dance education is an interdisciplinary field concerned with the *lived body* as it acquires awareness through movement within the environment (Joly 2004: 7). The strategies of somatic practices are multifarious and draw upon anatomical knowledge of structure and function in a manner that aligns with the methodologies particular to these practices. However, similarities in learning strategies do exist and include ‘movement patterning, experiential anatomy, developmental movement patterns, one’s own dance, touch, moving interactively playfully and intuitively’ (Fraleigh 2018: 11). The principles and their modalities of transmission of somatic dance practices recognize the power of awareness and self-regulation as essential for understanding the interrelation of the many complex factors—neuromuscular, biomechanical, psychosomatic, habitual, and environmental necessary for the efficient rendering of any movement (Batson 2007: 147).

Awareness is the capacity to sense, feel, to think, specifically in the context of and regarding the action of the living and sensing body (Joly 2004: 6). It is the ability of the self as a combination of objective and subjective physical processes of lived consciousness, to focus simultaneously and clearly on one’s internal experiences as they interact with the environment. Awareness exists because it comes from a living organism, with a body and a brain capable of representing the body (Damasio 1994: 46).

For Feldenkrais, the possibility to pause between the thought patterns connected to a particular action and the execution of that action is the physical basis for awareness (Feldenkrais 1972: 46). Feldenkrais describes his interpretation of awareness as consciousness combined with the realization of what is happening within it or what is

going on within ourselves while we are conscious (Feldenkrais 1972: 50) with the following example:

I use the word 'awareness' as conscious knowledge. ... I am conscious of leaving and returning home all through the years, yet I am not aware of the number of steps on the stairs. If I pay attention once and count the number of acts, such as shifting the eyes and performing whatever movements may accompany them in my head, arms, and legs, then I become aware, and that before I was only consciously mounting the stairs. 'Awareness' is used by me to denote conscious-of plus knowledge (1981: 94).

Self-regulation implies a recognition or construction of alternatives for action and decision-making and taking in the situational environment in such a way that the choices for action can be argumentatively justified (Feldenkrais in Beringer 2010: 81). The internal processes of self-regulation are vital for determining bodily structure and include the following skills:

Posing questions,

Making informed decisions,

Expressing needs,

Engaging in critical self-reflection,

Accepting the consequences resulting for one's actions,

Following one's interests in accordance with the context and in reflective alignment with the interests of others (Stinson 2000; Green 2000, Brodie and Lobel 2007).

Conducted through processes of homeostasis, self-reflection is one's biological ability to self-regulate and self-organize (Langer 1997: 17). For Feldenkrais, a consciousness endowed with awareness, self-regulation, agency, and self-reflection creates embodied and meaningful movement in the world (1972).

Increasingly research in somatic informed dance addresses its cultural implications (Green 2002, Fortin and Grau 2011, Wartburton 2019, Kampe 2013). Anthropologist Thomas Csordas speaks of embodiment as 'the common ground for recognition of the



other's humanity (2003: 278). Neurophenomenology's Francisco Varela speaks of how the world arises in relational modes of consciousness (1996). Social somatic positions concede a preeminent place to processes of socialization and the influence of the environment in the formation of the soma and the regulation of its interactions in the world (Fortin and Grau 2011, Fortin 2001, Green 2002) and assert that a one's unique body image, the shape(s) into which one grows and changes, is significantly influenced through social exchange (Noë 2004, Kampe 2015, Feldenkrais 1995). Somatic knowledge and experience are socially and culturally connected (Eddy 2001, Fortin 1999, Green 2002). Fraleigh proposes that teaching dance somatically involves respect for individual habitus and movement styles. We exist in a world of others, and our individual styles have a collective history (2017: 244). Somatics is grounded in the sensorimotor dynamics of the interactions that occur between a living organism and its environment. Knowledge is both interactively and intersubjectively constructed by one's sensorimotor interactions with the environment, (Warburton 2011: 67, Batson and Wilson 2014: 91).

## **6.4 The Feldenkrais Method®**

The Feldenkrais Method® is influenced by its founder's own investigations into the Western sciences of physics, systems theory, postural biomechanics, evolutionary biology, neurophysiology, and developmental psychology using thought-altering practices, such as autosuggestion and hypnosis, Eastern thought, and the martial art of judo (Czetczok 1995). Feldenkrais fused these disciplines and ideas to construct and operationalize a system that examines the harmonious connection between structure, function, and achievement of the human being in the world. (Steinmüller, Schaefer and Fortwängler 2001: 160, Peters and Sieben 2009: 25). He described his method as 'a special kind of learning: that of knowing oneself, learning to know how one is acting, and thus being able to do what one wants—the intense living of avowed, and sometimes undeclared, dreams' (Feldenkrais in Beringer 2010: 58). For Feldenkrais, the potential for self-realization that he referred to as 'mature behaviour' lies in one's ability to effectively decipher the nature of motivation and to modulate the dynamics

of actions freed from the dependency of compulsive reactions (1949). His 'mature behaviour' puts forth an idea of self-realization in a socio-ethical context to which the *ArtRose* community in dance strives.

Strategies of the method focus on deciphering habitual behaviour. Habits are not only learned and trained skills that allow one to engage in multiple activities while simultaneously undertaking routine tasks; they are behaviour that reflect one's ingrained biases, expressed as the reconfiguration of culture through one's own manner of embodiment (Sullivan, 2000: 33, Strauch 2006). Habit in dance is rehearsed skill, and habitual acts become inscribed in the body. Intentionality of a dance, even improvisation is already sedimented in movement memory (Fraleigh 2018).

Feldenkrais's distinction between consciousness and awareness has a direct correlation to habits. Feldenkrais calls behaviour that is reactive and performed without awareness, 'compulsive behaviour'. When routine movements and practices become automated or compulsive the possibility for reflection, awareness and creativity is blocked as is one's ability to optimally adjust and attune to the ever-changing conditions of the environment (Strauch 2006: 5). A primary investigation of this method is the sensate recognition of one's individual behavioural bias, its (dis) and reassembling that enable alternative pathways of action, to act from a state of possibility and thus freedom of choice.

Feldenkrais borrows from movement scientist Nicolai Bernstein's definition of 'dexterity' that speaks of this skill as '[...] a motor ability to quickly find a correct solution for a problem in any situation, [...] the capacity of dexterity appears to be, not in the movements themselves, but rather in their interaction with the environment' (1996: 210-211). This is what Feldenkrais means with the adaptation of ingrained habits to inter-act with resilience through life (Edinburgh 2013). This idea of dexterity as adaption is significant for all in the *ArtRose* ensemble as we are continually confronted with the necessity to exercise dexterity when dealing with both newly acquired and diminishing movement skills and their impact in the social construct of our lives. In addition, powers of sensory and proprioceptive discrimination are essential for the forming of alternatives to habitual behavioural patterns, and can be

sharpened by, for example, focusing on isolated motions in order to detect the slightest signals of change in bodily feeling, or by placing attention on the kinetic sequencing of movement patterns. This is the Feldenkrais strategy that directs attention to what one is actually doing and not to what one thinks one is doing. By separating intention from action, the practitioner can more efficiently clarify the outward representation of intention (Feldenkrais 1972).

Feldenkrais' paradigm of brain plasticity (1949) has since been validated by neuroscience and posits that the brain has the ability to recover lost functions throughout an individual's life span, to modify existing organizations, and to create new patterns (Doidge 2015, Hüther 2006). Learning is thus a consequence of how one uses one's biological potential in the context of brain plasticity. Neuroscientist Gerald Hüther reinforces this notion in stating that 'the structure and thus also the functioning of our brain depends in a very critical way on how we use it and what we use it for' (2006: 8). Practicing the Feldenkrais Method® one exercises the brain's flexibility for example through variations, permutations, repetitions, dis-organisation, re- organization, and the imposition of constraints. Its strategies and methods build upon one's existing strengths as a starting point to develop new ones to reinforce and clarify that what one can do as a way that supports agency, self-determination, and resilience. This method of somatic learning offers the practitioner a system for life-long learning that thereby challenges the myth of aging as a process of decay thus making the application of principles and strategies of this system particularly suitable in the *ArtRose* ensemble.

## **6.5 Self-Image**

A consideration of self-image is vital in the *ArtRose* community regarding both individual artistic expression and one's social connectivity. The self-image is an explanatory principle with no measurable psychometric or objective reality, existing as a phenomenon within the configuration of all human beings. It is intrinsically integrative, dynamic, and changing (Gallagher 2005, Rywerant 1983, Feldenkrais 1972).

Feldenkrais understands the reciprocity of thinking, feeling, and sensing through movement as the factors that construct the self-image, one that 'governs our every act [...] and is conditioned in varying degrees by three factors: inheritance, enculturation, and self-education' (1972: 3). Inheritance is the biological endowment of the individual and enculturation is the imprint of one's culture in the body. For Feldenkrais, self-education is of decisive importance as it is uniquely open to everyone and appreciably subject to individual will (1972). Feldenkrais professed that self-education is 'the force that makes for individuality and extends inherited difference into the realm of action' (2004:4). His interpretation of the self-image and its inter-relational processes expresses a deep appreciation for the wholeness of the person, the physical, emotional, affective, social, and cultural as '[...] thought that is not connected to feeling is not connected to reality' (Feldenkrais in Beringer 1990: 44). Feldenkrais proposes: 'I work on the person, not on the body. I don't know a body without a person' (2010: 203). This is a method that moves 'from the body; [it is] not about the body' (Bacon and Midgellow 2010).

## 6.6 The Practice

The instructive strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® use movement as the source of information to enable the (re)organization of the sensorimotor loop (Steinmüller, Schaefer and Fortwängler 2001).<sup>60</sup> Practicing the Feldenkrais Method® one is guided to reduce muscular effort in order to discriminate between subtle changes in sensorimotor stimuli, as well as to 'attune' to their movement experience in its relation to energy expenditure in the gravitational field. Improvement ceases when one no longer senses difference in the relation between effort, or the expenditure of energy,

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<sup>60</sup> The sensorimotor loop can be understood as a recurrent feedback system between sensor readings and motor reactions. Feldenkrais bases his work on this intimate relation between the sensory and movement systems. The former plays a key role in orienting, guiding, helping to control, coordinating, and assessing the success of a movement. Executing finely tuned movements of body parts with an increased awareness, in turn, creates a subjectively lighter and more relaxed experience of these body parts due to a more differentiated representation in the brain's map. Finely tuned movement can thus help to reorganize the motor cortex and the nervous system (Doidge 2015).

and movement (Feldenkrais 1981, Batson and Schwarz 2007). This method views the human skeleton as a blueprint for systematically exploring how the body can move along the lines of least biomechanical resistance and with the greatest mechanical efficiency. The nomenclature of the two forms in which the method is practiced, 'Awareness Through Movement' (ATM) and 'Functional Integration' (FI) describes its two principal concerns; the harmonization of intention and action, and the individual's fine-tuning powers to discriminate among one's own kinaesthetic feedback to act through processes of self-regulation and agency. ATM and FI are similar to choreographic processes, infused with self-questioning and composed of permutations triggered by variations, repetitions, constraints, and alterations in orientation always in dialogue with gravity. The method's indirect approaches of seemingly aimless playfulness of movement and visualization, and the sensory experiences of self-observation, offer the necessary strategies for training somatic and dance skills such as awareness, attention, and response. These are precisely the skills that direct the practice in the *ArtRose* ensemble.

#### **6.6.1 Awareness Through Movement and Functional Integration**

Lessons in ATM generally take place in a group. Practitioners are guided with verbal directives through explorations of deceptively simple and meticulously structured compositions of movement sequences structured around functional themes, such as breathing, rolling, crawling, and locomotion that reference both phylogenetic and ontogenetic patterns, often referred to as the developmental movement patterns as mentioned in section 6.3. Lessons are systematically deconstructed to explore individual parts from a variety of perspectives, and then reconstructed into the complete functional idea of the lesson. This process is like a zooming in and out, analogous to the disassembling of a puzzle and then its reassembling after fine-tuning the individual pieces. Small actions focusing on one or two joints, and their relationship to major body parts, grow into movements of greater complexity, range, and speed (Reese 1994). Practitioners become aware of how the musculature, skeleton, and

indeed their entire personality are involved in every movement. The point is to suspend habitual environmental contexts to discover new ways of doing the same thing. Lessons demonstrate the holographic nature of the nervous system, meaning that effecting a change in one part of a system creates a change in the whole (Sieben 2011, Pribram 1971). The clarity of language in ATM is instrumental in guiding the exploratory process, one that requires little, if any, representational modelling. Oscillating between the doing and the conscious reflection of action, one learns to reflect in action (Feldenkrais 1972, Schön 1983) as described in section 6.4.

Communication in FI is delivered through touch and tailored to the specific concerns of the client. In these one- to-one exchanges, the teacher's touch moves with the client in non-verbal dialogue through movement explorations that are initially experienced in a fragmented way before they are brought together and integrated into a whole. The teacher's listening hands hold presence; they wait for the proprioceptive signals of the client that signal permission to continue. Lessons in FI are experienced intersubjectively, articulated by Feldenkrais trainer Carl Ginsberg as '[...] through touch, two persons, the toucher and the touched, can become a new ensemble (2011: 267).

Both ATM and FI are structured and systematic but avoid the pitfalls of outer-directed and end gaining approaches to learning (Reese 2015: 471). The exploration is placed within a structure and within this structure one is asked to find the clarity and playfulness necessary for personal discovery. The experience of FI and ATM draws one into a state of relaxed concentration from which one can attend to the sensorimotor feedback loop that informs the self-regulating powers of one's nervous system. Feldenkrais postulated that the more one accepts knowledge of the automatic regulating functions of the nervous system, the greater freedom, ease, control, or coordination one gains (Czetczok 1995). Feldenkrais prescribed: 'Don't you decide how to do the movement; let your nervous system decide. It has had millions of years of experience and therefore it knows more than you do', (quoted in Reese 1994).

As the Feldenkrais Method® relies on the innate intelligence of the individual's nervous system to learn, the strategies in this method help the learners to 'find out' for themselves, rather than being told exactly what to do. Therefore, what passes between people during practice is informative and not prescriptive<sup>61</sup>. In this way the method refrains from explicitly determining what the learning might be and how it might be physically expressed. The facilitator offers tailored and contextual information and suggestions for movement with the intention of stimulating processual and embodied self-questioning. Practitioner's work at their own pace and navigate their own way through the somatic movement learning proposals offered. A series of simple and concrete instructions and suggestions, 'put into question' the how, why, and what of the action, thereby reinforcing the individual's self-instructing capabilities. The following passage offers an example of how I might cue a practitioner to bend one knee and stand one foot from a prone position:

Bring the right foot up again to stand as before, and review in your mind how you brought it up. Was the foot passing from one place to another in the air or was it dragged along the floor? What part of your foot might have been connected to the floor or not? Could you notice your hip joint? Or what about the activity in the muscles around your thigh bone? Was there a moment when the foot left the floor? Repeat this movement, notice if you feel any intention to stop breathing.

Language and pacing of the instruction allow the practitioner to think while she acts, and to act while she thinks - or thinking with the body. This is the pedagogical strategy used in the *ArtRose* ensemble. As facilitator I strive to engender conditions that the dancers can 'find out' themselves. The following section describes fundamental principle of this method and includes my commentary on how we experience them in our practice.

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<sup>61</sup> However, at times with the *ArtRose* group I do need to demonstrate to clarify a movement idea or movement principle as demonstration is for the learning of new motor skills (Bläsing, Puttke, and Schack 2010).

## **6.7 Principles of the Feldenkrais Method®**

### **6.7.1 Reducing Effort, lowering external stimulus**

‘Anything that tends to lessen the sensitivity of the power of discrimination will slow down response to stimuli’ (Feldenkrais 1972: 75). The physiological law of Weber and Fechner<sup>62</sup>, to which Feldenkrais specifically refers, states that discrimination is finest when the stimulus is smallest, and the muscular synergy between agonist and antagonist produces a proportional and comfortable distribution of energy throughout the entire body (Peters and Sieben 2009). Acting with the minimum of energy for maximum efficiency, one can recover to a more neutral state of increased structural sensitivity, leading to well-coordinated exertion that is healthy, powerful, easy, and pleasurable (Feldenkrais 1980). Improvement is based on the parameters of ease and pleasure.

### **6.7.2 Creative Self-Questioning**

Using functional, observational, suggestive, and associative language cues, the facilitator poses imaginative, and at times paradoxical questions that direct or invite the practitioners in a process of self-questioning in order to discover one's own truth. The manner of questioning generates sensations and images that arise through movement and the observation of self and other (Kampe 2015). Lessons are propelled by questions that attend to the means of achieving a goal and not to the goal itself. Self-questioning allows for indirect pathways of experimentation and learning.

### **6.7.3 Novelty in Repetition**

Repetition is fundamental for learning any skill as movement patterns become inscribed in the nervous system through copious processes of repetition. Bernstein

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<sup>62</sup> The Weber-Fechner law states that subjective sensation is proportional to the logarithm of the stimulus intensity; the just perceptible difference between two stimuli is proportional to the magnitude of the stimuli and the subject's sensitivity (Feldenkrais 1949)



described learning as ‘repetition without repeating’ (1996). This definition implies that the practitioner’s repetition of an action or actions, carried out with an attitude of curiosity and wonder, helps one to discover the range of possible responses to similar stimuli. The shifting focus of one’s attention is an additional strategy for promoting fresh approaches when dealing with the ‘same’ movement material. Crafting subtle variations with the material, for example, by changing the familiar spatial orientation of an action, disassociates it from its habitual context. A small variation of this kind affects muscular effort, creates new spatial relationships, triggers kinaesthetic discernment of change, and thereby changes the action itself. Novelty in repetition, shifts in attention, and subtle variations, and changes in sequence are processes that search for alternatives, rather than attempting to determine and repeat a single solution. The table below offer a practical example for directing attention to execute the motion in a variety of ways to stimulate kinaesthetic responses that illicit both internal and external change in the motion.

**Table 1. Novelty in Repetition: a non-locomotive swinging motion**  
  
 Standing, repeat a swing motion with arms and torso forward and back to the vertical. The dancer continues moving while the cues are being given (Coogan 2016: 159-164)

Integrative Awareness	Grounding	Movement Initiation
What happens when you bring your attention to your breath?  Do you notice a change?  When do you breathe in and when do you breathe out while swinging?  How much time do you take for the inhalation? And for the exhalation?	Follow the sinking and rising of your pelvis when you swing.  Can you sense a buoyancy in your pelvis when you swing both downward and upward?  Does the amount of pressure on the soles of your feet on the floor change when you swing?	Allow the weight of the head to initiate the swing. How do your spine, arms, pelvis and legs respond?  Let the weight of the pelvis initiate the movement and listen to how the head, spine, arms, and legs respond.  Begin the swing from a place where you can feel

<p>Imagine swinging in the middle of a cloud.</p> <p>Allow all parts of yourself to unfold in the same amount of time as you swing.</p> <p>When do you arrive at the deepest place of the motion?</p> <p>Follow the movement of your arms and legs to the summit of their elongation.</p> <p>Is the path down the same as the path up?</p>	<p>While you swing, do you notice the shape of your spine and the distance between your head and tail?</p> <p>How do you feel the space on your right side and on your left side while you swing?</p> <p>Pay attention to the spatial pathway of your two ears and your two shoulder joints while you swing.</p> <p>Follow the movement of your ears and shoulders and spread your attention to your two trochanters.</p>	<p>dropping to start the swing motion.</p> <p>Is it possible for you to round the whole torso as you begin to swing?</p> <p>Begin the return to the vertical by opening out from the center of yourself.</p> <p>Do you use the pressure of your feet on the ground to propel you back to the vertical?</p> <p>Do all parts of your arms fall into gravity at once?</p> <p>Can you initiate the release of your arms from your shoulder joints?</p>
	<p>Measure the distance between your head and feet and your two shoulders while you swing.</p>	<p>Caress the air with the underside of your arms as you initiate the swing.</p> <p>Outline an arch with the tips of your fingers in space as you swing forward and return to the vertical.</p>

#### 6.7.4 Rest, Pause, and Reversibility

Lessons in the Feldenkrais Method® are examples of distributed activity (Batson and Schwarz 2007) as the pacing of a Feldenkrais lesson aims to strike a balance in the autonomic nervous system between activity, resting and pausing in the recognition that learning happens both in conscious and unconscious states (Peters and Sieben

2009: 54). By slowing down to allow time to assimilate the idea of the movement, delaying action and prolonging the period between the movement's intention and its execution facilitates kinaesthetic feedback on which the nervous system can build enhanced awareness and improve functioning (Feldenkrais 1972: 46). The handling of rest and time support the method's principle of reversibility demonstrated by the ability to pause, continue, or reverse action at any moment without any preliminary change of attitude or effort (1985: 113). Reversibility effects a kind of quintessential poise, which enables the individual to exercise choice at any moment during an action (Reese, quoted in Feldenkrais 1985: xvi).

#### **6.7.5 Structural Constraints**

Constraints are strategies for creative self-reorganization and for compositional ingenuity, fashioned by restricting movement in a part or parts of the body. Unusual corporeal and spatial relationships can be formed that inhibit movement from progressing along habitually organized routes. Table 2 offers a choreographic score using a structural constraint.

**Table 2. A 'structural constraint' as a creative catalyst**

The exploration is non-locomotive and begins either in standing or on the ground. The constraint is composed by keeping one of your feet attached to the same place on the floor for the entire movement exploration. The front part of the foot (the point between the big and second toe) remains attached to the floor. The heel and arch of this foot have the freedom to move, turn, swivel, and leave the ground vary the amount of surface area that remain in contact with the floor or the place on the chair. The rest of your body has unlimited range of movement. Feel free to move upwards and downwards, always keeping a part of your leg and/or foot in contact with the floor at all times (Coogan 2016: 165-169).

Imagine the floor underneath you and the ground around you as a giant map or landscape. Begin to explore this landscape with your "gesture," or traveling leg and foot, in a way that allows for movement in all different directions. Remember to keep your standing foot in place and to maintain contact between a part or parts of your exploring leg and foot and the floor at all times. Can you travel to the right and left sides of yourself, to places downward and upward? Move your traveling leg and foot with varying degrees of pressure along the floor. Allow different parts of your gesture leg to dance along the floor.

*Consider how you shift your weight, change your spatial orientation, use your arms for support, or reorganize your trunk in relation to your legs as you investigate the possibilities of movement within this constraint.*

Continue to explore your traveling leg and foot with varying degrees of pressure along the floor. Allow different parts of your gesture leg to dance along the floor.

*How does the inward and outward rotation alter the relationship of the leg to the hip joint? How do you organize your torso? What changes do you notice in*

Try this out with only a part or parts of the front side of your leg and foot, and then finally with only the back side. Alternate between all four sides. Watch how the possibilities for movement are related to which parts of your leg and foot surfaces come into contact with the floor. Consider the range, ease, flow.

Allow your exploration to bring you into different spatial orientations, sitting, standing, positioned on your belly, upside down, in quadrupedal stance, or changing levels.

*the quality or range of movement?*

*What kinetic considerations emerge when you experiment with the 360-degree radius of the movement possibilities for your leg and foot?*

*How might you need to (re) organize parts of your body in order to accommodate changes in spatial orientations?*

**Roll over to one side to come to a standing position. Begin to walk through the space. How do you sense your verticality?**

**What differences can you appreciate in your right and left sides?**

Take a moment to note your thoughts in words or images. When you are ready, re-establish the constraint and resume your movement score.

Share your score with a partner—one person dances, the other observes. Change roles.

*What do you notice about your movement personality and the patterns that are appearing? Did the self-reflective act of writing endow your exploration with greater clarity?*

*What changes when you share this self-directed exploration with another person?*

### 6.7.6 Imagining

Kinaesthetic imagining and visualizing images are tools that have long proven effective in facilitating neurological change and promoting performance enhancement (Batson and Wilson 2014, Sweigard 1974). Sensory-, verbal-, and motor-based imagining, kinaesthetically imagining movement ideas or sequences without actually doing them are practiced extensively in the Feldenkrais Method® (Coogan 2016, Sieben 2011). Imagining in this method proceeds through relying on one's own kinaesthetic feedback and sensory perception without the aid of external visual or kinaesthetic images.

## 6.8 Conclusion

Working with the Feldenkrais Method® one is asked to depart from certainty and to recalibrate assumptions about where knowledge lies. The method draws on the individual's innate competencies for self-learning through processes of awareness and self-regulation and focuses on self-image, self-observation, and self-questioning (Mellor, 1998: 462.) Feldenkrais emphasized the critical importance of sensation and movement in the arising, stabilization, reinforcement and changing of behaviours. He used the meaningfulness of movement to imitate development of the client's self-image as evolved in everyday activities in its tactile-kinaesthetic, emotional, and cognitive acts. In this process, movement serves as a tool for gaining awareness in action as a capacity for improving life (De Jaegher, Pieper, Clénin, Fuchs 2017).

Harvesting from the principles and strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® the practice of *ArtRose* practitioners engage in a mutual search for potential options for action. We learn to 'know' more clearly the function and felt organization of movement patterns, gain a more variegated sense of movement, and develop skills to improve individual ability to adapt with greater freedom of choice (Peters and Sieben 2009, Kampe 2015). Practicing together the members of the ensemble develop artistic expressiveness, create unique movement personalities, aesthetic sensibilities, and attend to the sensate worlds of becoming. The following chapter demonstrates the application of the principles and strategies of this method in the dance practice and performance on

the *ArtRose* ensemble; thereby, addressing the research question that looks to the efficacies for artistic development and community building at the intersection of the Feldenkrais Method® and contemporary improvisational dance practice.

## Chapter 7

### The *ArtRose* Community in Dance



Picture 6 *ArtRose* practice

Photo: Merker

#### 7.1 Introduction

Fundamental in the *ArtRose* ensemble is the identification of personal roles and relationships to others, the sharing of responsibility and authority, and the commitment to exploring social somatic improvisational dance supported by the principles of the Feldenkrais Method®. The dance practice and performance are ones of scored improvisation and attempt to support each person's perceptual world of bodily becoming, of presence in self-with other(s) that forms through the movement of relation, of listening, initiating, responding, and reciprocating touch. Underlying the



Feldenkrais Method® is the conviction that experience is formed depending upon how one attends to it (1972).

This chapter is devoted to the dance practice, creation, and performance in the *ArtRose* ensemble. Somatic, ethical and cultural positions identified in previous chapters of this thesis are readdressed in their relation to the research question that identify the artistic efficacies of performative practice with amateur adult dancers in a landscape defined by traditional aesthetics and their notions of concert dance.

A personal reflection on dance and ageing open this chapter. It continues with a brief exposition of the conventional forms of dance that are accessible for older adults in Germany. Following is an accounting of the beginnings of the *ArtRose* ensemble, the participant group, research setting and structural organization of this community. After this exposition, the chapter unfolds the creative methods and dramaturgical processes of the practice dance making and performance in the *ArtRose* community of dance and identifies the making and performance of the dance, ‘Mut und Gnade’, getanzte Reflektionen über Mary Wigman (Courage and Grace, danced reflections on Mary Wigman), the practical submission of this thesis. Throughout the chapter, notated in italics are the voices of the dancers gleaned through semi-structured interviews, group discussions and text responses to questionnaires<sup>63</sup>. My own reflective researcher writing endows this chapter with an auto-ethnographic perspective and thereby grants a voice to my lived experiences as an ensemble member.

## 7.2 Dance and Aging

A focus of my research with the *ArtRose* community addresses the possibilities for novel invention and artistic expression that aging can bring. Therefore, in the *ArtRose*

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<sup>63</sup> All interview and text material collected from *ArtRose* members are in the German language. Translations of the original material have been undertaken by the author. In greater and lesser degrees all members, past and present of the ensemble have contributed data through recorded and transcribed group discussions and interview and text responses to questionnaires. Data collection has taken place intermittently from 2014-2020. A full transcript of interviews and text responses to questionnaires can be found in Appendix 5.

community the focus is directed to that what is still to learn, individual yet undiscovered potential, rather than on that what one can no longer accomplish with ease and dexterity. Pivotal somatic pioneer Thomas Hanna spoke of the societal conditioning that locates age with decay and ever declining and disintegrating motor skills, calling this a propaganda about the myth of aging (1976: 33). Indeed, in Western cultures, the passing of time and the mortality of the body is often regarded in a framework of decay and loss of capabilities (Martin, 2017, Nakajima and Brandstetter, 2017). Decay with age and thus aging is often equated with sensorimotor amnesia, or the loss of the sense of kinaesthesia (Hanna 1976). Hanna advocated the invalidation of the 'myth of aging' when the individual attunes to kinaesthetic feedback, or the attention to sensorimotor response. A somatic approach in dance addresses precisely kinaesthetic and sensorimotor feedback. An inventive way to that can deconstruct the 'myth of ageing' is the playful use of constraints employed in the Feldenkrais Method® a manner that is neither restrictive nor limiting; but rather, one that can serve as a catalyst for creative invention and kinaesthetic response. Constructing a compositional inquiry that places a constraint, for example, in the movement of a body part or segment, can stimulate other non-constrained parts of one's body to unpack movement possibilities otherwise left out of focus. The *ArtRose* practice works with a variety of constraints in ways to free and to liberate parts of oneself that have been relegated to decay (Refer to Table 2 in 6.7.5). When one deals with processes of limitations as creative inventions, a space for new learning might emerge.

The weighing and balancing of what is gained and of what one must let go of in the aging process becomes a question of readjustment. Therefore, I look neither for aesthetic substitutes or replacements in my own practice nor in practice with the *ArtRose* ensemble, but rather to direct my practice and that of others to tap into reservoirs in oneself still unknown. When one works with explorative, experiential approaches in dance, it is easier to find a subjectivity beyond a narrative of decline (Martin 2017).

### 7.2.1 Conventions of Dance with Older People in Germany, a brief overview

The plethora of both conventional and non-conventional performing arts offerings in state and municipal theatres, cultural educational institutions, and community centres that receive federal, state and city subsidies enable a wide spectrum of the population to share in cultural life either as patrons or participants.

The opportunities for older adults to participate in the performing arts of theatre and dance are varied depending upon one's place of residence. For example, in the former West German state of North Rhein Westphalia there are 80 senior theatre groups (Ibk-Kubia.de). In the city of Dresden there is not a single group. Of course, this inequality is significantly influenced by the differing histories of Germany, East and West as discussed in Chapter 3. The *Tanzsportverband e.V.*, the national dance sport association for seniors is instrumental in offering dance to the aging population. The offerings of this association are vast and include courses and meetings in different styles of dance, as Folklore, Oriental, Revue, Competition, and Fantasy<sup>64</sup>. Participation in the different groups and their level of expertise is based on one's level of experience (www.tanzsport.de). Dance in this context is understood as a multi-faceted practice: gymnastic, fitness, rehabilitation, social, rhythmic, relaxing, and generally supportive of health. What is underdeveloped in the construction of nationwide dance practice is the individual creativity, artistry and expressivity of the dancers.

There are community projects that are cross-or intergenerational in which older people can participate; however, ensembles of solely elder adults are few and far between. The *Initiative Tanzkunst & Alter* (Dance Art and Elders) of which the *ArtRose* ensemble is a founding member, is the first national project of its kind that prioritizes the artistic potentialities of dance with older well-trained or little-trained amateur adults. Of the sixteen ensembles of this initiative, the *ArtRose* ensemble is the only one is from a former East German state. Each ensemble has its own identity in terms of organizational structure and methods of practice and perhaps performance. To my

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<sup>64</sup> Fantasy dance involves dancing with accessories such as veils, fans and candle trays. The other forms listed are self-explanatory (www.tanzsport.de).

knowledge, the *ArtRose* ensemble is the only one that is ongoing and is grounded in distributed authority and leadership and proceeds on a cost-free basis. In addition, the artistic identity of the ensemble, grounded in a contemporary interpretation of *Ausdruckstanz* that is performatively expressed through scored improvisation is a singular construct in the sector of older amateur dancers. *Tanztheater* is the preferred form, as it often follows a narrative and employs a theatricality that is perhaps more easily accessible for the participants as it integrates dance, theatre, and voice.

### 7.3 Beginnings of the *ArtRose* Community in Dance

The catalyst to embark on a creative journey with older adults in dance art practice and performance was the occasion of my mother's 80th birthday. For this octogenarian celebration, I offered her the gift of a dance that was to be created and performed with non-trained people of her generation; a dance to celebrate the vibrancy and vitality of mature experience and dynamic expressivity. The opportunity for this creation was seeded in an invitation from the *Tanznetz Dresden*, a platform of independent dance in Dresden and environs, to present a thirty-minute work in a shared evening of dance produced by *Hellerau European Centre of the Arts*. The inspiration to begin was fuelled by the following provocation of Feldenkrais:

[...] We never use more than 10 percent of our abilities, except on the one thing on which we build our life (meaning our profession). There we use our full ability, or almost all of it. But there is no reason why you shouldn't do this on every level of your existence (2010: 90).

Feldenkrais' proposition invites not only reflection about the focus of one's energy and attention and the possibilities for its redistribution, but also teases about curiosity for continued learning. Accordingly, my interest was to facilitate a situation in which all participants, including myself, could tap into reservoirs of unknown potential in the discovery and to expression of the novel.

In January 2011, an eclectic group of ten Dresden citizens aged 60-78 came together to make and to perform a dance. Assembling the group, I actively pursued acquaintances

of mine sceptical about dance, doubtful of their own dance facility or fearful of performing. When asking people to join the project I often received the response: 'I cannot dance.' Countering this response, I quoted Laban's much cited axiom: 'Everyone can be a dancer'. A dancer announced that [...] *the claim that 'everyone is a dancer' was convincing and so I decided to get on board (March 2014).*

Those people that I addressed, in turn, invited their own acquaintances to join and so, thorough word of mouth a group of ten dancers, nine female and one male, undertook this project in a state of curiosity and uncertainty. None of the dancing people had ever engaged in such an enterprise before. Few had theatrical experience, and most had never performed before an audience. A primary motivating force for many of the dancers to join in was [...] *curiosity to get to know and to try out another style of dance, besides the more common standard dance (March 2014).* Another participant who had experience with classical dance at a young age joined because of her [...] *desire to express myself through dance (March 2014).* Dancing expressively was a yet untried and intangible idea for all. All ten dancers voiced that they had not experienced dance as a conduit for expressing feelings or emotion, or as an expression of *lived body* experience. Speaking in a collective sense a dancer revealed that [...] *at the beginning we all eyed each other with a bit of mistrust as this form of movement was something new (March 2014).* However, everyone agreed to work from a register of practice through scored improvisation informed by the Feldenkrais Method® and to collaborate in the processes of creation. We sought common ground in communication through movement, language, aesthetic disposition, and presuppositions about what a dance piece could be.

*I wasn't completely sure if this was the right form of movement for me. It was completely different than any I had known before. I couldn't really imagine making such simple movements expressive. Yet, each individual in the group fascinated me, and therefore I wanted to find out if our group dynamic would make it possible for us at some point to 'speak' a common language (March 2014).* This comment from one of the dancers demonstrates that at the onset of our process the atmosphere in the group was receptive albeit sceptical as the dancers were not presented with a

dramaturgical plan or script but rather were offered visual, poetic, and kinaesthetic cues for sourcing movement. Therefore, time was needed for the performers to recognize and to trust in the performative viability and artistic value of our project together, and to know that their dance could communicate to a public.

Issues of artistic integrity arose for me as I had to recalibrate my register of practice in facilitating the creation and performance of a dance with a group of eager people with little or no experience with dance within a very limited time frame. The dramaturgy of this dance incorporated the individual wishes and desires of each performer honouring that what is precious in everyone; hence, the title, *Small Moments of Greatness, ein Bewegungsschor für Tänzer im erfolgreichen Alter* (a movement choir for successfully aging dancers). Over the course of four months, we met once weekly for two hours. In the final preparation phases before performances, the meeting times intensified to three to four sessions per week. The dancers were challenged to develop and to craft their own movement language and to focus their attention simultaneously on their movement, the presence of the other dancers and the soundscapes. The responsibility to make and to take their own decisions in the creation of the dance posed a further challenge. Finally, ten days before the first performance, a scored improvisation emerged. This dance, premiered on the 6th of May 2011 under the auspices of the Performance Series linie 08<sup>65</sup> in the Nancy Spero Saal, Festspielhaus Hellerau. Dance critic Boris Michael Grühl wrote in the the *Tanznetz* portal:

The eyes are shining: the bodies alert. Ten women and one man made up this movement choir for successfully aging citizens of Dresden[...].The small show has a great charm. Everyone is featured, both together as well as in sensitive and individual passages - in pairs, in unison and in variations that always draw the group together again. They create their own rhythm, they hum and sing [ ...] Jenny Coogan has supported them all, overtaxed is no one –playful and delightful movement was guided in both form and measure (06.05.2011).

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<sup>65</sup> The series Linie 08 was a platform for showcasing the independent dance community in Dresden and environs in mixed bill evenings of dance.



Picture 7 ArtRose Performance *Small Moments of Greatness*  
Photo: Merker

The satisfaction generated through both the creative processes, the performing experience and the positive audience responses left all the dancers eager to continue. *Small Moments of Greatness* was performed again for the annual conference of the German Feldenkrais Federation in February 2012 in Berlin. What began as a singular performance event has grown organically over years into a ‘community in dance’ that moves in fluid processes of negotiation, transformation, and renewal. Out of the communicative objective to make and perform a dance in a somatic, democratic, and ethical climate of respect for diversity of thought, knowledge, culture, and personal identity became in 2014 the site of my PhD research.

The ensemble has created and performed seven dances. On the 3rd of November 2018 ArtRose premiered the work, *Mut und Gnade, getanzte Reflexion über Mary Wigman* (Courage and Grace, danced reflections about Mary Wigman) in the theatre at the University of Visual Arts in Dresden. This 40-minute work for fifteen dancers and one musician constituted the practical submission of my thesis and will be discussed in

section 7.6. A revised version of this work was performed again in September 2019 in Berlin as part of the Festival *FELDSpiel*.

## 7.4 Structure of the Ensemble

*Taking responsibility for myself and the group to me means adhering to my emotions, carrying out conflicts and saying things out loud (March 2020).* This statement of a *ArtRose* member echoes the fusion of the somatic, democratic, and ethical principles put forth by Dewey, Buber, Arendt, and Feldenkrais that build the theoretical and ethical foundation of this thesis. The factors of continuity, interaction, responsibility and committed action, form the social reality of the *ArtRose* ensemble and provide it with a framework for the cooperative enterprise in which we are engaging. The structure of the *ArtRose* community in dance is what Dewey determines as a democratic association formed through the consensus of its members rather than through an externally imposed democratic form of governance or in the words of an *ArtRose* member: *I think it's good to just bring things up and point them out. Then you can see how the other person reacts. I think this is a prerequisite for being honest with each other, otherwise one can't get involved in the group (April 2018).*

The ethical foundation for this community is built on Buber's ideas of reciprocity and the turning movement of I-It and I-Thou encounters reflected in the following statement of an ensemble member: *And I think everybody deserves a chance. I can see that with me, I also depend on you to accept me as I am. Even with my quirks and limits and restrictions and everything I have. And I think that's the same for all of us (April 2018).*

In a complementary manner, Feldenkrais postulates that how people move/dance reflects the memory of how they live, that makes behaviour the movement expression of the individual's self-image (1972). After two years of participation in the *ArtRose* ensemble, a member remarked: *How I move, is who I am (June 2016)* and another member shared a similar idea with the following: *[...] this physical way of*



*getting in touch with people, getting close to them and building up and feeling trust, with as little control as possible from the head, from learned opinions and ideas, appeals to me very much (March 2020).* The *ArtRose* community (re)forms and (trans)forms through the manner in which each person is recognized, appreciated, and valued by the others. The following comments of ensemble dancers reflect our ethos:

*The people who dance with me give me impulses and then the whole group appears to me as one big whole (March 2018).* Indeed, belonging in *ArtRose* relies on horizontal pathways of communication, personal and collective agency, and shared responsibility. The ensemble members carry their unique differences, aesthetic coding, tastes, and sensibilities for socio-cultural norms, that what Pierre Bourdieu defines as *habitus* into the common space (1984). Regarding the multifarious singularities and convictions of the group's members, one might conclude that working together proves quite challenging. This is not the case, as we allow the co-existence of our diverse histories and narratives that, at first glance, might not appear to belong together. The *ArtRose* ensemble strives not to draw boundaries and to make distinctions as these can lead to comparisons and evaluation. The group agrees to disagree. Dewey stresses that conflict or disagreement is a vital component for the sustainability of democratic associations as it can stimulate the adaptability and resilience of the formation ([1918] 2008). The looseness of the personal relationships outside of the dance practice is the strength of the ensemble, as action, in the sense that Arendt (1958) puts forth takes the place of collective ideas, ideologies or personal relationships. Cultural theorist Gesa Ziemer suggests that when the social bonds of collective actions are weak as in *ArtRose*, the group becomes more dynamic, and allows for new combinations in which unexpected elements are connected to one another (2016: 64). The social-constructivist Bruno Latour (2007) reminds that it is through differences that forms of sociality unfold. These lie beyond homogenous social orders and institutionalized bonding models and circulate with intensities and instabilities that make every environment unique. The *ArtRose* community in dance has shifted from a collective to a connective, in the sense of Arendt's communicative action that is based on the quality of acting together. Intended action through which unforeseen realities arise,

takes the place of collective ideas. Collective and connective both underscore each member's perspective and make the dance practice and performance the central object for inquiry endowed with every member's lived body experience. Change, reform, disruption, and clarification happen in the self-sustaining phenomenological ecology of the ensemble. Sociologist Jürgen Habermas speaks of community as an entity that resists closure, never completed but always emergent, as it by nature embodies a dynamic of continual development (1988). The ensemble exists in a state of continual change, due to the individualism of its members, fluctuation in membership and in how all navigate with their own ways in dance and performance with common resources.

At an address at the conference *Stretching the Physicality of Dance* dance scholar Brenda Dixon Gottschild stressed that 'equality does not mean sameness' (August 23, 2017). In the *ArtRose* ensemble equality exists through the acceptance of difference. There is no ranking of physical skill or worldviews regarding political persuasions, social, cultural, and family interaction, that include how one dresses, eats, and moves through the activities of one's days. Interaction and relation are not conditioned by individual decorum's, beliefs, habits, and habitus that differing lifestyles bring. The group ethos is committed to expressing compassion and trust in relation – to oneself and with the others. Dance Icon Steve Paxton stated the 'the politics of mutuality suggest collaboration: it doesn't suggest monitoring the correctness of another's behaviour' (2018: 37).

A dancer commented: *One also has responsibility in the group, for the existence of the group, for the existence of the community. One has to be committed to fit in with the group (April 2018)*. Responsibilities for the continuity of the group are divided between individual members, as are all decisions regarding the planning and scheduling of productions and performance. The different roles and responsibilities are of equal importance and negotiated fluidly depending on the interests, abilities and identities of the group members, and the actions to be accomplished. Members share responsibility for costuming, coordination of performance venues, organisation of rehearsal space, travel, performance publicity, vacation planning to address a few

points. I try to stand back from power and engage as a co-learner in the situation, one who does not provide answers, but rather, in the manner that Dewey postulates, facilitates conditions in which all dancers can experience, investigate, and form their own dancing realities, alone and together, in a shared process of creation.

At the end of 2016, The *ArtRose* community in dance organized into a non-profit association, or *Verein*. *ArtRose* must now respect the regulatory procedures of a *Verein* that include collecting association dues, filing taxes and the delegation of specific member roles. This change in the structure of *ArtRose* served to strengthen individual commitment, as our guiding principles and processes for joining were identified in written form. This degree of institutionalization has not affected our pathways of communication or inherently changed our ways of being together. A participant remarked: *I think it was important to formulate certain basic rules or conditions. A philosophy, so to speak, that distinguishes this group and clarifies the things that we uphold (April 2018)*. This organizational framework strengthens our collective identity and now includes a three-month trial period for people wishing to enter the group a strategy for dealing with potential (mis)integration. A dancer commented: *After all, it takes sensitivity to be able to develop something together in the group. It means and needs trust when I lean on you. I am outwardly sociable [...] but to really get involved is not easy for me. You really need to be involved in the group [...] (April 2016)*.

#### **7.4.1 My Position in the Group**

Ethnographic research is a reflective process recognizing that we are all part of the social world we study, and like all social research, is founded on the human capacity for participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 18). Reflectivity in this context considers both how the field is affected through the researcher's involvement in it and recognizes that researcher's subjectivity must be accounted for in the analytic processes.

My dual roles allow for a fluid exchange between a first-person perspective of the dance and community experience and a third-person vantage point of a critically

reflective researcher. Dancing with this group, I experience both inner and intra space in which a feeling of a collective body emerges - a corporal reality – a weaving of first and third person perspectives.

Regarded from the viewpoint of Buber's philosophy of dialogue, the symmetry or asymmetry in relations determine its fullness. Buber posits that genuine dialogue is reciprocal, symmetrical exchange; people who both address and are addressed. In contrast, an asymmetrical relational constellation, is one in which the observer's gaze is fixed upon an object, who cannot return the gaze of the observer. To ensure the possibility for symmetrical relationships between all members of the ensemble, it was necessary to have everyone participate fully in the ensemble's dance and performance activities. Furthermore, my role in the ensemble is to facilitate a relational dance experience, one that is not about trying to create something that is already formed in my body-self or imagination. The goal is to offer all dancers the opportunity to investigate concepts as collaborators and co-creators. Therefore, the creations are not projections of my own artistic vision, rather they take their own pathways and emerge from the collaborative input of its members. In 2015, in the third year of research I began to perform with the ensemble. The phenomenological experience of being inside the dances endows the research with greater authenticity, as I am not writing about the creative process and performance experience of others, I am living these experiences myself.

#### **7.4.2 Participant Group**

Nearly ten years after its founding, six of the original ten members are still active in the ensemble. One founding member has since passed away. Presently there are twenty-two ensemble members, nineteen women and three men ranging in age from 26 to 82. In addition, seven people danced and performed with the ensemble for differing lengths of time ranging from six months to three years. A time of assimilation and accommodation is necessary for each person to know if the ethos of this community of practice speaks to them or not. A newer member shared her process of integration

with the following reflection: *With every week in the group, it worked better, we inspired each other, and of course corrected each other. Often, I had to ask for help, because I just could not seem to internalize some ideas, and everyone was happy to help me. Sometimes I could help others as well. This being there for each other makes the group so valuable for me (March 2020).* For most people entering and remaining in the ensemble a period of integration proceeds along a trajectory articulated in Lave and Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral participation (see 4.3) in which more seasoned members guide the newer ones in our methods of practice in both dance and community.

The *ArtRose* dancers, past and present come from a variety of professional backgrounds<sup>66</sup> that include social, pastoral and health care workers, electrical technician, journalist, musician, secretary, physiotherapist, professor of natural science, tailor, librarian, doctor, gastronome, operational manager, Feldenkrais practitioner, masseuse, sculptor, IT technician, and teacher. Most of the members are retired, some are still working. All but two members have lived their lives in the former GDR. Most members are from Dresden and the region. All but three past and current members are German nationals (myself and two students). The verbal language of communication is German; most of the dancers are monolingual.

The members carry with them a variety of experiences with dance, both in practice and in spectatorship. As ballroom dance has a long tradition in Germany, many members practiced the different dances of this genre in their earlier years. Few were familiar with free style dance. Some members voiced that they had never consciously danced before joining the group. One member had practiced ballet as a child and contributed the following observation: *In my past experiences I had never been asked or encouraged to express my feeling and emotions in dance (January 2014).*

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<sup>66</sup> It is to note that all former East German citizens had employment. Therefore, the women in the *ArtRose* ensemble were working mothers. After the reunification many lost their jobs and were retrained in other areas.

During the years following German reunification several members had experience with a variety of dance forms as meditative dance, Hawaiian dance, tap dance and zumba<sup>67</sup>. After joining *ArtRose* one member commented on the form of contemporary *Ausdruckstanz* practiced in the ArtRose ensemble in relation to her past experiences as: *It took me a while to understand and internalize the kind of dance in our group. Before, dance for me was essentially rhythmic movement to the beat of the music (tap dance, Zumba) [...]. Expressive dance has been a completely new and wonderful experience for me (March 2018)*. The most recent member of the community contributed her experience with dance with: *Before I came to the ArtRose group, I was familiar with the typical dance lessons of following steps and patterns. There we also had pleasure in dancing, but one's own feeling did not find the way to be expressed through the body (January 2020)*.

The experiences in the ensemble have affected not only individual emotional responses to dance as illustrated in the comments above, but also have altered the aesthetic sensibilities and dispositions of many of its members. Regular attendance at cultural events such as musical concerts, drama, opera, and dance have figured into the lives of most of the present and past members of the ensemble. Therefore, over the years a question was repeated in multiple questionnaires given to participants that inquired about the changes in their manners of spectatorship in dance or choice of attendance at dance and other cultural events. The underlying question sought to discover if the dancers had experienced a change in their own aesthetic appreciation of dance as both practitioner and as spectator in dance performance, as aesthetics is conditioned both by cultural norms and personal experience. My interest was to see how the member's perception or appreciation of dance performance might be affected, after their own experience with contemporary expressionist dance in the *ArtRose* ensemble. The following three statements from *ArtRose* members reveal a range of change when reflecting about dance both as an artform, and as a spectator in

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<sup>67</sup> Many members supplement their dance practice and performance with activities as biking, swimming, hiking, sailing, cross country skiing, yoga, Fitness and ATM lessons.

regard to kinaesthetic empathy and the logistics of the movement itself: *Dance as an artform has become more important in my life. I have become more conscious of the performances I choose to attend (February 2014).* Another member offered: *Since I have been moving myself, I have internalized dance and have a completely different view. I know what it takes to move like that [like a dancer] and can empathize better. Perhaps I also understand much better what dancing means. So, on the one hand I notice this change by moving myself, and on the other hand by noticing that dance now appeals to me much more than theatre [...] (April 2018).* And the third observation: *Watching dance has always interested me. But before, I would never have gone so deeply into it. In the meantime, I always see it with the viewpoint: 'Ahh, you could do it like this, and he really does it from here - from the shoulder or, where is the movement coming from, that's exciting! When the spark jumps over, it's like I'm much more taken by the dance! (April 2018).*

Beginning in 2013 students in the Bachelor and Master of Arts Programmes in Dance Pedagogy at the Palucca University began to join in weekly practice with the group, motivated to learn about working with older dancing amateurs, or to simply enjoy an improvisational practice in a non-evaluative environment. A former student member described her experience in the group as: *The approach of the ArtRose group is more directed on the research, process, creativity, and expression of each member than on some kind of final point. I think being part of ArtRose really showed me that it is more than possible to work with a community dance group on a level that involves long dedication to the process, lots of patience and open mind, and that elderly people, who haven't been really close to the dance world before, can be eager and so involved in the process of creating something new and unusual [...]. My main role in the piece wasn't to support others, it was to perform together with others (November 2019).* Another student member commented on the emotional import she experiences when sharing the ArtRose practice: *I think it's so great how you open up, how you can open up and how much you reveal, and I think it's just so great that you dare so much and I take so much of you with me, every class, every rehearsal. There is so much wisdom floating in*

*the room, even if you don't say anything, you don't have to say much. You also have such an amazing presence on stage, because you bring such stories with you, that impresses me so much (April 2016).* To date five students have been fully participating members of the ensemble for differing amounts of time. When I am incapacitated either a student member leads the practice, or the ensemble facilitates the practice through collective intervention. All dancers are able to direct themselves evidenced with the comment: *In the ArtRose ensemble there is inner freedom for expression and for intuitive navigation (January 2020).* The ArtRose community in dance is for many a place of freedom, of novelty, a space to abandon the spoken and unspoken, social, and cultural hegemonies that can permeate one's daily life.

From the onset, both physical and emotional self-care both has guided our practice. It is one of modulated intervals of activity and rest. Care of the self is not only an attitude towards oneself but also carries a sense of responsibility for others and for the world. Feldenkrais trainer, Mark Reese describes care of the self as: 'Sensibility through which individuals are conscious of their own thoughts and attitudes of self-reflection and meditation and participate in practices aimed at raising awareness of the ideal state of the self' (2005: 11). With the attitude of self-care all ensemble members have learned to modify the verbal and physical cues given in practice according to their own temporal needs reaffirmed by a member as: *I also think that our dance is important emotionally, so we express our emotions, we've experienced the possibilities now here, how this can work, and I think we do this quite actively. And afterwards, you are just freer, so you feel more comfortable, your head is freer, and we all feel better. So, our dance is not only on a physical but also on an emotional level (April 2015).* In this sense one is able to take care of herself in both dance practice and creation.

Taking care on oneself is of essential importance in the ensemble. Members choose when they might share their medical issues with the others as many dancers are dealing with severe health concerns that at first glance are not visible. These include hypertension, connective tissue disease, cancer, diabetes, depression, trauma, hip osteoarthritis, and other forms of degenerative joint diseases. Everyone lives with his or her own physical, cognitive, emotional, and affectual singularities. These make up



the changing fabric of our beings. Though the practice of *ArtRose* supports resilience, recovery, and enhanced ability to cope with health-related matters, the ensemble's practice is primarily artistic and not therapeutic. We are fundamentally concerned with how we are using and feeling our bodies through conscious reflection on how we are moving ourselves as conduits for emotional and artistic expression. In addition, the settings of our weekly practice and the performance venues in which we present our work impact upon our aesthetic appreciation and experience.

#### **7.4.3 Research Setting**

The research setting cannot only be considered as the physical and geographical place, but also as the metaphysical and phenomenological space. One feels and acts differently in different places and in different spaces. In other words, the interaction of environment on agency cannot be overlooked. Architect and Feldenkrais Practitioner Wolfgang Meisenheimer proposes:

Entering a building and looking at it without feelings of well-being and woe, affective disposition, liberation, and oppression, does not exist. Before the beginning of explicit, conceptual thinking, the body has already adjusted to spatial sensations, and initial evaluations already characterizing these feelings (2004: 18).

Since its forming, the *ArtRose* ensemble has been meeting at the Palucca University of Dance and delight in the opportunity to share weekly Monday practice in this environment. Entering the building one is affected by its expansive, sunlit dance studios, broad corridors, and graceful exchange between its inside and outside spaces within the building and between the building and the surrounding outside garden spaces. The aesthetic appeal coupled with the pulsing and committed activity of the dancers that inhabit this space effect body attitude and comportment. There is a phenomenological sense of belonging, a sense of physically fitting in. Both the geographical and phenomenological space endow the members of the ensemble with a sense of beauty and grace. Their bodies are honed with alertness when we dance in this space together. The affective disposition of the dancers' changes when we work in

different environments<sup>68</sup>, for example, in a high school gymnasium, a multi-purpose room at a community centre, or at a studio of a Feldenkrais practitioner. Philosopher Edward Casey postulates that the environment of the lived body is located in a physical, historical, social and cultural space and therefore knowledge is, in part formed by the surroundings (2001: 683). Dancers have expressed that they feel considerably less motivated or have less creative inspiration when meeting in a variety of multi-purpose rooms in Dresden than in the Studio at the Palucca University. As such, the effectivity of our practice and satisfaction of the dancers significantly improves when we meet at this institution.

#### **7.4.4 Expanding the Ensemble into the Greater Community: Hellerau**

In September 2016 as part of the audience development program at the European Centre of the Arts-Hellerau, the *ArtRose* ensemble began offering cost free monthly workshops for people 60+ both singly and in cooperation with visiting guest artists at the Centre. The members of the *ArtRose* ensemble facilitate collectively a practice, that empowers all to assume responsibility for communicating both verbally and in the dance itself our form of a scored improvisational contemporary dance expressed by an ensemble member as: [...] *the fact that people come that you didn't know before means that you have to get involved with a stranger in such a workshop situation in a completely new way that creates an exciting, new situation (February 2020)*. When visiting artists join the workshop, all are introduced to other formats of contemporary dance. Following the workshop participants are invited to attend the evening's dance performance together in the *Festspielhaus*. *These workshops in Hellerau are a great experience for our group - that others dance with us there and that we can always watch the performances afterwards ourselves. I feel that an inner expansion (March 2018)*. This platform increases the visibility of the *ArtRose* ensemble in the cultural landscape, serves to forge a place for dance art with elders in this context, and offers ensemble members exposure both in in practice and spectatorship to a wide variety of

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<sup>68</sup> When working on the creation of a dance or in the reconstruction of an existing one, we augment the weekly practice with extra rehearsals. Most of these rehearsals take place in different locations in the city.

contemporary dance expressions. *I find it exciting to experience other dancers and to get to know other philosophies. Because this enriches me immensely and makes it exciting, too, because we are not always dancing in our own juice (January 2019).*

Furthermore, many of the more recent members of the ensemble joined after participating in this Hellerau workshop series, and for other participants this experience has led them to attend public performances of the ensemble.

## 7.5. The Practice



Picture 8 *ArtRose* practice

Photo: Merker

In the *ArtRose* practice as in Feldenkrais lessons, an atmosphere of relaxed concentration often arises as the modes of transmission invite all to attend to the sensorimotor feedback loop that informs the self-regulating powers of one's nervous system. The shared atmosphere of questioning and exploration induces both a synchronization of action within the group and the cultivation of a condition wherein

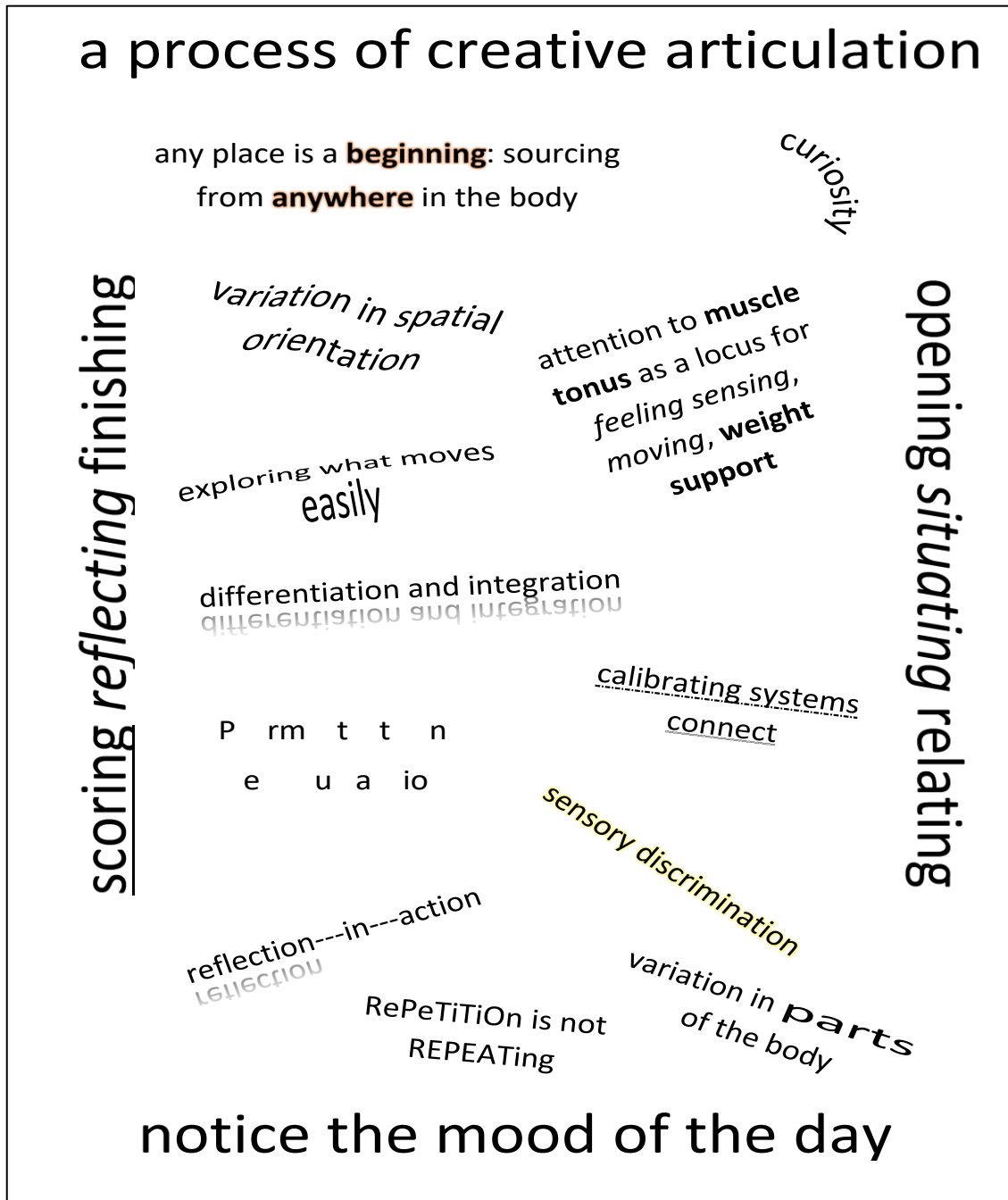
each person can transform the subjective impressions gained from internal sensory stimuli into objective representations in the external environment that thereby create a sense of community that unfolds without a leader or imitative practice. Shaun Gallagher speaks of this condition as kinaesthetic intercorporeity (2016: 28). This is a phenomenon that joins physical and intersubjective space in the livestreaming of interaction, in which one's own sensory and kinaesthetic perceptions are regulated and aligned in a way that brings each one to a synchronizing transformation of h/her own intentions and actions in the reciprocity of the community that resonate beyond one's separate self.

Dance practice and dance making processes in the *ArtRose* community experienced through the lens of the Feldenkrais Method® is more about proceeding with an approach guided by this method than about the inclusion of specific ATM or FI lessons in the dance itself. The approach put forward in the context of the *ArtRose* ensemble combines directive, imitative, explorative, and task-based modes of transmission expressed through dance improvisation. Methods include:

- Engaging in creative self-questioning to unveil curiosity for learning,
- Loosening the binds of control to allow space for 'not knowing,'
- Replacing 'right' and 'wrong' with informed choice,
- Imagining, both as a neuromuscular action and a metaphorical inspiration to unleash the possibilities of what movement can be,
- Encouraging pleasure and playfulness,
- Investigating the relationship of effort and ease,
- Inviting paradox to reduce the rigidity of belief and to welcome the multiplicity of perspectives and variations for learning,
- Focused direction of attention to engage with the possibilities for repetition,
- Returning a question with a question in order to listen more intuitively to one's own felt experience (Coogan 2019: 20).

Practical applications of these parameters for the facilitation dance practice and creation with the dancers in the *ArtRose* sources from the processes in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Points of a Practice



The practice begins by assessing the situation, the mood in the space to offer a congruent measure of physicality and interaction fitting for the bodies worlding that emerges. The plan for the practice unfolds as all direct attention to the passage of forces of intensities between bodies created as a part of both the conversational and unspoken movement of a group coalescing, so beautifully expressed in the words of an ensemble member as: *Within the group, my perceptive abilities have greatly improved in the shared dance. You can feel the others without seeing them! (April 2017).* Every Monday afternoon the practice begins differently. My own researcher notes taken after a practice in 2016 articulate the way a practice can begin.

*We place attention on a part of our bodies- feeling it, questioning it, moving with it, recognizing differences. We notice contact with the floor, with the space around, with others. Shifting spatial orientation, we notice what happens. We redirect our attention to spaces moving in our bodies, respond to changes in flow, in weight, in time. We listen to our breath, absorb the verbal cues, intuit with the music. We add – we vary –we re-sequence, create individual dances- swinging, gliding, striding, floating. We join in two, convene as a group and find synchrony in our different dances, in stillness and moving, in a flow of relation.*

The practice is cued primarily through language and not by demonstration. Little external modelling is present. My cues, imaginative, sensory, associative, paradoxical, and conditional, develop into scores that serve as starting points for group explorations that may lead to choreographic invention. Fraleigh has described this manner of cuing as a language of permission (2015: 252). The ambiguity of language gives rise to images that evoke multiple interpretations, and possibly provoke the kind of disruption that may lead to self-questioning. Thus, both words and movement seek out meaning; introspection grasps towards the language of thought, as action and reflection unfold in the same temporal space.

An opening cue in *ArtRose* practice may ask the dancers to move from the sensation and feelings of breath cascading, flowing, unfolding, or drizzling through one's body. Another may be to invite the dancers to attend to the weight of their breath and its effect on muscle tonus while travelling through the space. We may begin with a rhythmical pattern collectively built and that remains ongoing until we all embody the

rhythm and can be responsive to its modulations. Or we might move in- though with- and- between each other spreading our attention so that the focus of our bodies includes all dancers' simultaneously. The words of an *ArtRose* member describe the structure of the practice as [...] *I notice an inner structure. You start with Feldenkrais and special exercises for certain topics, body areas or movement qualities and from these there usually develops - first for each person alone - an improvisation, which then leads to encounters, in which the beginning of the lesson is present. Because the training has a structure, which I experience as not linear but from the outside to the inside, at the end of the training I am addressed and involved in the dance as a whole person and often touched, not only on the physical-sport level (March 2020).* Cues are given in action; practice is therefore one of 'reflection in action'. This practice allows everyone to work within the register of one's own sensate experiences whilst observing and appreciating the explorations of the others that might lead to an assimilation of the ideas of others into one's own practice.

The following examples are cues that lead into scores.

**Breathing:** Exploring the movement of your breath as it opens and closes your hands as in the shape of a bell or of a jelly fish moved by the rhythms of the current. Let this movement swim and spread through the arms in the torso down to the pelvis, breathing upward and downward through the legs and filling and emptying the feet. Notice the porous contours of your skin opening out to the world -movement glowing between inside and outside worlds – changing the rhythms and undulations of this jelly fish breath, changing the currents of your breath flowing, filling, emptying, outpouring, calming.

**Attending to oneself:** address the places in yourself that move freely, let the movement emerge into the world, indulge, and enjoy this freedom of movement and see how it can inform other less vibrant places in yourself to invite them to become more alive. Notice how a single movement can create a kinetic chain reaction through the body, invite other spaces in yourself to join in the dance and discover relation.

Allow patterns to arise and to repeat so that your dance takes you travelling through the space.

**Experimenting with gravity:** releasing into the earth of finding ways to move easily into the floor and recover to the vertical again. Allowing the head to release its weight into different spatial orientations. How do you feel when you surrender a part of yourself into the support of gravity? Find pathways that allow you to lower yourself into the floor, to yield into the ground, to spread the surfaces of support.

**Bending, undulating, swinging, twisting** bring differentiation and mobility in the spine and torso with attention to movement sequencing, modulations of muscle tonus, modulations of energy expenditure.

**Contacting:** Coming into contact is the preferred manner of interaction for most of the dancers. We practice connection that moves beneath the skin surface to join two systems, two skeletons.

**Touching:** Guiding with an informative touch supports the dancers' movement exploration, by indicating to the practitioner where movement is already happening to endow it with greater clarity and to suggest pathways for it to spread and to include more of the body becoming.

**Finishing:** The practice always draws to an end with a reflection on the shared experiences of the meeting. This happens both through dance and at times through reflective verbal exchange. After two hours of practice, we part for the day.

**Scoring: 1.** Begin to elongate the right thigh bone forward in the space. What other parts of yourself can come along? Is it the same with the left leg? Allow your pelvis to rotate, to swing right and left and let your spine join in the dance. Can you notice the movement in your thigh bones when you rotate your pelvis to the left and right? Turn to look over your left shoulder to say hi to your neighbour. How do your thigh bones respond, and can you notice a change in the pressure of the soles of your feet in the ground? Allow your thigh bones to direct your dance with the quality of milk running through your body as you begin to travel through the space open for encounter.



2. Interlace your fingers with the palms of the hands touching. Maintaining this constraint, discover the infinite possibilities for folding and unfolding your arms. Allow your shoulder blades to help you. How does rotation enter in your dance? Are you elbows happy? Search for spatial and temporal variations. How do you coordinate movement in the upper and lower parts of their bodies as a duet conversation? Can you stride through the space whilst at the same time dancing the upper body dance of hands connected?’

As these examples demonstrate, dancers are offered spatial or bodily structures from which to source their dances alone, in pairs, small groups and all together. The fusion of social interaction and accountability with the strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® of somatic learning and relational contemporary dance improvisation supports receptivity, memory, processualism, and spontaneous construction. Remaining faithful to one internal awareness and allowing these impulses and sensation to determine the nature, shape, and emergence of one’s dance verifies the authenticity and meaningfulness of the dance that in turn, can communicate openness and responsiveness. Commenting on our scoring practice, a dancer reflected: *I can now feel the energy flowing through the dancers' bodies, admire the harmonious movements of our bodies and better recognize the feelings that are expressed (February 2020)*. The structure also gives a roadmap for finding variations and ways to adapt the cues to accommodate individual needs and desires. In this manner the dancers of the *ArtRose* ensemble develop repertoires of individualized movement, free of the anxiety to produce or to ‘do it right’. *I have won more expressiveness. [...] by now I trust myself and can perform a movement the way I imagine it (March 2018)*. The methods of practice are age accommodating as they allow for the integration of physical constraints and waning athletic abilities as part of our creative processes and procedures. Perceptual weighing and balancing of difference in body sensation support the practitioner to decipher the changes that make a difference so that the dance can become easier, more pleasurable, and more connected to the others. *Through exploring during the long warm-ups everyone has developed so much repertoire and understanding that we can create in the moment- that what was not rehearsed or even*

*intended. We have the background now to deal with our bodies. And this is like a circle that we know what we are doing with our bodies (2014).* Meaning, purpose, and function arise organically and become evident to the individual in the process of doing. The trust, respect, and empathy that the members of *ArtRose* share with one another allow us to take risk in our weekly improvisational practice and in our improvised performance practice.

As members of the ensemble do not source from bodily inscribed histories of stylized dance movement, as most have had little or no previous dance training, they construct their own idiosyncratic vocabularies through a scored improvisational processes and procedures. Practicing with the ensemble, I had to learn to deconstruct layers of inscribed aesthetic codes, felt hierarchical structures and restrictive assumptions in dance that had made up a part of my daily experience for so many years. All members of the community share in processes of constructing and deconstructing our own personal styles of artistic expressivity that meet in a register of practice that celebrates an aesthetic of poetic simplicity.

#### **7.5.1 Observation of Practice from an Observer**

The following observation of a practice was made by a visiting dance artist working with the BA dance performance students at the Palucca University.

The participants came in and changed into their dance clothes in front of each other. They did this with a familiarity that is common in dance contexts, but arguably unusual for non-dancers of the same generation. Jenny mingled with the dancers as they were changing and interacted with them as a friend and colleague. There was no sense of a hierarchy or status differentiation.

Physicality was first exhibited not in relation to a given exercise or prompting but seemed to unfold out of the participants' conversation. I observed Jenny bending into a deep position with bent knees, extending her spine diagonally upward, with both arms directed diagonally downward to the floor. It seemed that the others were not compelled to participate in this exchange, yet some took notice and started to explore with the movement possibilities this posture afforded. She demonstrated an interactive way to encourage the weight to drop while extending the spine. She showed the dancers how to

hold and lightly pull on a partners' hands and wrists to assist in sensing this. The focus and energy in the room shifted. The class was involved in a common task of exploring the posture and its potential for informing movement.

Jenny spoke as she moved, encouraging the dancers to move with each other's "aura". What came to mind was the question of the relationship between physical limitations and possibilities?

Slowly the energy started to build. A physicality that included balance, weight shifting, and touch evolved. She encouraged the dancers to find a playfulness with the movement and asserted that they should continue moving in pairs, trios and quartets maintaining contact while continuing to move.

The second half of the session consisted of more choreographic elements including short scenes, tasks, and a compositional structure with specific timing and spatial patterns. The original posture that was explored at the beginning of the session returned as the basis for a theatrical procession across the space. The posture united the group in a shared physical form, while allowing them to explore with small variations as they walked a path from far to near, moving slowly and steadily towards their audience. In this moment it was clear what a joy it is for the group to perform and to practice their performative skills.

Another task followed in which the dancers walked through the space according to specific rules dictated by an agreed upon choreographic score. The aim was to embody the physicality of a group of hikers on a walk along a nature trail. The challenge to this task was for the dancers to avoid the tendency to use pantomimic gestures, and instead focus on their physicality.

Emphasis was placed on personal choices while selectively imposing form for functional purposes, as well as interaction through touch and indirect leadership. The dancers exhibited the ability to connect to their sensations and translate those sensations into movement decisions.

What occupied my attention was the involvement in a creative, expressive unfolding of movement. Skills were gained through the involvement in an artistic process (April 2015).

## 7.6 Creating Dances

The expressivity and confidence of the individual dancers coupled with the quality of kinaesthetic intercorporeity (Gallagher 2016) have made the creation and performance of dance works as important as the weekly practice. Not only the performance of dance works but also their co-creation brings deep satisfaction to many performers expressed as: *Performances bring me desire and incentive to continue expressing myself artistically. It inspires my life without many words (February 2020). And On stage I feel very strongly the joy to experience and show myself dancing, moving, telling and giving something to the audience together with the group, especially this joy of dancing and living (February 2020).*

With few exceptions, creation begins with no externally given theme. Resources for creation are generated through our weekly practice. Everyone identifies and shares in the group the issues, ideas, and physicality that interest them. From this material images, scores and eventually the dramaturgical structure of the artefact is forged in collaboration with all ensemble members and therefore can only arise in the moment of meeting. A member emphatically professed: *[...]to be a co-creator: this is a great thing, because you can express feelings, experiences, that which burns on the soul (February 2014).*

All members accept that change is a central part of the choreographic practice expressed by a member as: *I like the developmental method by which our pieces are created. I'm good with experiments when I recognize them as such or when they are named that way (March 2020).*

Individuals develop their own strategies to evoke physical and affective responses to ideas and themes that emerge collectively. The physical expressions of the themes manifest themselves in each practice differently; however, their communicative import should remain relatively constant. My role is that of steward who supports dancers to tap into the reservoirs of creative potential, alone and together, and to bring *Gestalt* to the ideas and affects that emerge during our practice. In this sense I do not place myself as sole choreographic authority. This presupposition is supported by an *ArtRose*

member: *It fascinates me how we were all involved, sometimes nearly unnoticed, in the development and construction of our pieces (March 2020).*

My method of choreographic facilitation is not typical in amateur practice, as there is usually a distinction between the professional and the amateur. In *ArtRose* this distinction is obsolete. Our practice is guided by the reciprocity of Buber's dialectic, Dewey's form of democratic association and Arendt's idea of participative equality. This means that there is no single choreographic authority. Responsibility and decision making are taken collectively.

The common denominator for all works is collaboration, from the generation of the ideas and themes to the creation of the material and dramaturgy. In this sense the training is not different than artistic creation. We integrate the externalized perception that identifies structure with the internal experiences that clarify function. We perform our practice. The following statement of a founding member of the *ArtRose* ensemble expresses not only the collaborative nature of the choreographic process, but also the emergent nature of our choreographic strategy. This begins in the unknown, a fundamental base of somatic learning as a diving into the unknown invites inductive processes of discovery.

*What increasingly interests me is how the choreographies are created. Well, for me it's almost like a thriller. And what I now understand after seven years is that it's not possible to set up a fixed plan from the outset and then fill it somehow and work through it. That certainly won't make a good choreography. And this mixture, that you have a scaffolding that can be rebuilt again and again and then really be filled [...]. I find this exciting. Of course, I don't see this process when I go to performances, but with us now I really enjoy our process, and maybe it is now a little bit different than the past ones, because we're starting much earlier with the creations, and I'm very curious to see what happens (March 2018).*

## **7.7 The Making of the Dance *Mut und Gnade (Courage and Grace)***

*Courage and grace are things we encounter constantly in life. The more I dealt with this topic, the more I felt about it (March 2020).*

In late 2017 when the *ArtRose* ensemble embarked on a new creation, the Mary Wigman Association was forming in the city of Dresden. The ensemble decided to join the cultural Zeitgeist of the moment in the city and looked to both the person, Wigman and her artistic vision for inspiration for the new work. Distilling the specific image for this work we sourced from Wigman's following statement: '**It was beautiful to have to begin over and over again from the beginning, and to be able to begin again**'<sup>69</sup>.

The section of this provocative sentence – **being able to begin again** – was the catalyst for our new production. *Mut und Gnade, getanzte Reflektionen über Mary Wigman* developed over the course of 10 months through weekly practice, and supplementary rehearsals beginning in the two months preceding the performance.

Thematically this piece revolves around the idea of pathways travelled as a metaphor for memory and new beginnings. Therefore, the spatial pathways that the dancers and musician travel through the dance build are guided by the image: Every step one takes – every new beginning – is a transformation of one's entire self.

As in the past, we began the creation in an inquisitive manner, so that each performer could individually approach the collectively identified topic of the work. I generated the material for the final unison scene that was subsequently modified by many of the dancers to suit their needs. Fifteen dancers (12 women and three men) and one musician performed in the production.

The dance dramaturgy is divided into six scenes that are sub-divided into smaller episodes.

## 1. Prologue

- 1.1 Three men: defining the terrain through the mediation of a simple step: Three dancers construct and clarify 3 spatial pathways: diagonal, horizontal and sagittal as a metaphor for decisions taken in one's life.

## 2. Letting go to begin again

- 2.1 Women travel along linear pathways and allow memories to arise in their bodies. When a memory is clear they relive this memory in dance in place.

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<sup>69</sup> Es war schön, immer wieder von vorne Anfängen zu Müssen und Anfängen zu können' (1963: 47).

The dancers let go of this memory to begin on a new path that allows a new memory to emerge. The pattern repeats.

**3. Dialogue of hands and feet**

3.1. Four dancers travel along a pathway from past to present speaking through the dance of hands.

3.2. Nine dancers in two groups travel forward along opposing diagonals in a dance of feet in a shared pathway of individual expression and intersect with one another.

**4. Pathways taken together in relation**

4.1. A trio of a singular direction: Three dancers in profile striding across the stage - focused, upright, archaic, in the spaces if one another

4.2. A quartet intertwined: a circuitous pathway across the stage to a common destination.

**5. Risk taking**

5.1 three dancers enclosed in a stretchable material, risk, daring to fall, trusting to be caught.

**6. Aging playfulness**

6.1 the childness of adulthood

**7. Rolling and Turning**

6.1 Changing perspective, all in Flux, eight dancers in continuity and changing perspective

6.2 one dancer navigating his way through a changing undercurrent of bodies rolling.

6.3 one meditating dervish

**8. A still point at the turning world**

7.1 a man turning: others being pulled into the gravitational field.

7.2 women turning in a circle: a sign of unity.

**9. Determination and unity**

8.1 a shared idea, a shared movement pattern

The projection of sand mandalas on the backdrop that were created and wiped away throughout the dance support the primary theme of the work, a letting go, in order to begin anew.

#### 7.7.1 Researcher notes complied during the process of creation

**These notes were taken at a time when the concrete decisions for the building of the scenes were prioritized. They express the variability of the working process of the group and the extreme shifts in affect from one week to the next.**

##### **June 13, 2018**

Discordant voices, frustration growing in the group as we are rarely all together.

This reflects problems in group expansion, having more people means rarely all are present. Its consequence leads to losing cohesion and coherency.

To move forward all must remember to remember and reflect on the practice.

Ila states that she is not able to reproduce, but this is not the issue; rather it is the ability to remember the perceptual parameters that constituted the dialogue or feeling in oneself. To recapture the conditions in which you might be able to bring forth the feelings, the state, the import of the scene that happened in a time before. This is not remembering to repeat.

I have the feeling that there is stagnation in the group. This has made me bored and, I think, others as well.

##### **June 20, 2018**

After our arriving and tuning in we spent a major part of the session exploring how to move in and out of the floor with spiral-like, twisting, and transverse pathways. Everybody was excited to learn something new. In this moment I realized the necessity for me to not only offer cues but also to instruct and to demonstrate as the dancers in the ensemble would like to expand their vocabulary with new skills that they do not know how to realize themselves. The importance of both *knowing what* and *knowing how*!

As explicit instruction is taboo in the Feldenkrais method, I had been hesitant to offer demonstrative instruction and have mostly relied on individual somatic processes of learning in developing one's one movement vocabulary.

However, now we are a point that the other methods of learning can enter our practice without the necessity to - get it right- How to move forward with a combination of deep somatic experience and gentle coordinative demonstration.



This lesson was satisfactory for all – they were really happy afterwards full of appreciation and joy as they all learned a new skill.

Ila is mostly negative and cannot adapt herself to the cues, or directives that I give. She always does something else and always gives another reason for this. Today she was really involved and stayed attuned to the idea, because it was very personal and had no consequence for the others as we were working on solo tasks during the session.

### **August 08, 2018**

Went into the rehearsal with scepticism – a bit negative that there are 11 weeks before the premiere. Stress is building.

Talked about the expressive possibilities of the spine – and the fish – and that this is a core of *Ausdruckstanz*, on which our practice is based. So, we looked at the possibility to release the weight of the head and to curve the spine with the pelvis vertically aligned over the legs in many different constellations.

Then directed attention to two scenes from the dance: turning and the foot dialogue.

Worked on the phenomenon of turning. The cue was to allow yourself to be turned; to release cognitive decision and let yourself be turned by the motion of turning itself. Most members did not initially understand that the idea to remain in constant motion. The calmness to give space to that what could be- took some time to emerge, but clearly Renate and Eckard found themselves in this experience. Ila was completely inside of the experience. She voiced that due to the warmup, the attention to the yielding and pushing of the feet and the buoyancy of the pelvis, she accessed the ability to turn in one direction with gesture, change of level ease and enjoyment for minutes at a time.

Foot dialogue: 2 groups, listening, coming in sync, leading to unison walking step, to lead into a dance pattern. Lovely interaction when the two groups passed – one moved more horizontally the other stayed on the diagonal pathway. The horizontal group then changed to walking backwards: Very effective.

I could add a third group for this scene. I begin to see that most scenes need a multiplicity of action as the dance is becoming too meditative.

### **August 20, 2018**

Practice began with environmental images to elicit kinaesthetic responses.

Towards the end of the practice videos were made. These show that there is little dynamic variation in the piece. I have lost the thread – we work on scenes and sometimes there is really a moment of satisfaction as all feel – this works! But then

at the next rehearsal it is gone. How to capture the fleeting moment in a new fleeting moment days or weeks in the future?

The fact that every rehearsal there is a different constellation of members makes me feel very frustrated. I project this frustration on the dancers, and this creates a negativity in the room. I do not always mediate what I intend to mediate. I wonder if I do this in other circumstances of my life as well.

We need the energy of the younger people in the piece for the challenge to move out of our comfort zones that might lead all to try out new things.

I am lost I don't know what I want to say, and I don't see that the dancers know what they want to say either.

At the moment we are swimming in monotony.

### **August 27, 2018**

What a lovely session.

I was in the studio on the floor oscillating when dancers started coming in. One by one they all joined in the rocking quietly joined filling the space with a rhythm of progression, at once individual and shared. This needed no explanation. Eventually and organically we all came to sitting and began to experiment with mobility of the legs in the hip joint and with wave-like spinal succession through the spine and spinal rotation- I was leading but then in fact following the responses in the space.

I entered the studio for the session without a plan, but in sensing my own need to resonate in oscillation, I knew there was a need to find a rhythm together. At the end of the session, I recognized the extent of which the dancers can follow their energy, intuition, bodily impulses, respond imaginatively to verbal cues and simply access the situation. This is independent of the physical skills that they can demonstrate.

How to put this subtlety into the context of a dance performance.

I recognize that my role as the one to bring *Gestalt* to the explorations is necessary for the group. They need specific support to source dance movement and creative investigations from the facilitator.

Improvisation in this session was built upon remembering a short and fixed pattern and experiencing this pattern – resolute, decisive, and exact. This quality of energy is more difficult for the group members to access perhaps due to the desire for harmony. My recognition that we needed to source a firmer more decisive energy in the group so that a specific scene can unfold with contrasting energetic qualities, as happened in the session today. It ended with satisfaction and the feeling that we are progressing in the development of our new work.

### 7.7.2 Performance



Picture 9 ArtRose Performance *Mut und Gnade*

Foto: Merker

The performance of the 45-minute dance *Mut und Gnade* took place on the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2018 at the *Labortheater* in the University of Visual Arts in Dresden. Seeking a congruency between the improvised dance work and the music resulted in an original musical score created in collaboration with Sascha Mock, and live improvisation by Alina Gropper on the violin. This score is supported by two recorded tracks by John Lurie and Nik Bärtsch. I collaborated with two students from the University of Fine Arts, Department of Stage and design in the creation of the stage and light design. The work was part of a full evening of dance that I curated and co-produced by the University of Visual Arts<sup>70</sup>. Approximately 200 people on two evenings attended the performance (see video and photo documentation in Appendix 2).

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<sup>70</sup> The University offered the theatre space and the technical assistance for the dance evening free of charge and retained the full amount of revenue obtained through ticket sales. All other costs were carried by the *ArtRose* ensemble. Rehearsal time in the theatre was limited to one day.

### **7.7.3 Critical Analysis of *Mut und Gnade* and the problematics of a community in dance**

In the making of *Mut und Gnade*, we all have been confronted with a new register of challenges. To date this was our most complex production regarding the length of the work, number of performers, musical score, and stage and light design. A greater investment of time, commitment and responsibility was necessary for all participants in the making and performance of this work. The logistics of rehearsal coordination due to my full-time work schedule, the myriad of activities that the members pursue and the time straddled vacation plans from May through August 2017 created a situation in which the entire cast could rarely meet. At times, the rehearsal process felt tedious as though we were treading in place. The costuming and musical score arrived just in time for the performance. The dancers responded with adaptability and acceptance.

Stage time in the theatre, for both the technical rigging and rehearsal, was limited to one day. The dress rehearsal was the first run-through of the piece with all 16 performers. Therefore, no one had neither the opportunity to develop a feeling for the pacing of the work nor to decipher how most effectively they could navigate through the dance. For four of the dancers this marked their first performing experience.

Despite the brevity of preparation time in the theatre, the second performance of *Mut und Gnade* was, in part, reconceived due to the illness of one of the male dancers who cancelled three hours before the performance. This required a readjustment of cast in several pivotal scenes. Everyone rose to the occasion. In fact, the second performance was clearly more successful than the first one. The excitement, professionalism and courage expressed in the days of performance demonstrated that this effort brought satisfaction, elation, and validation for us all. One dancer expressed: *I feel more challenged to give more as a whole – time, intensity, reliability, emotions. I observed that during this intense amount of rehearsal time I can also feel my body better in everyday life (March 2020).*

An underlying tenor accompanying the process was one of self-imposed pressure to produce a professional piece in an amateur setting that could fulfil one's own

expectations to shine in performance under professional theatrical conditions. I felt this stress in many of the dancers. As I have been engaged as a professional in dance for forty years, I do not take issue with producing professional work in an amateur setting; rather, the challenge for me was the issue condition of evaluation as this work constituted the practical submission of my PhD thesis. I experienced intensified levels of tension and responsibility, and at times projected this stress onto the members of the ensemble creating disruption in the learning environment. Simultaneously during the creation many of the dancers were going through physical and emotional hardships that impacted upon their ability of being present in the process. Clearly the personal lives of us all impact on the energy, concentration, creativity, and ease that we bring into the dance space. A dancer reflected: *The group is one that over the years has developed sensibility with the others, when the mood is not good, disruptive factors affect the commonality (June 2017).*

Woven throughout this thesis is the understanding and argumentation for the *ArtRose* as a community in dance, a social connective of shared authority, shared responsibility and of shared leadership that implies a horizontal power structure that enables the sustainability of the ensemble. As no two people are alike, many interpretations of what these conjectures might mean arise that lead to differing expectations among the members. Following the production of *Mut und Gnade* the ensemble undertook intensive, reflective, and evaluative discussion about the process and performance of *Mut und Gnade* but more fundamentally about how the community could move forward in the future. The outcome was a new register for the expectations and organization of rehearsal practices, performance obligations and calendar scheduling for future creations. We found consensus through the open expression of our different perspectives on the issues in question. Table 3 outlines the conditions in the *ArtRose* community that enable its continuity.

<b>Table 3. Conditions for a <i>Community in Dance</i></b>	
<b>Conditions for a <i>Community in Dance</i></b>	<b>Specific issues of contention</b>
Shared responsibility	Commitment to extra rehearsals nearing a performance
	Placement of the ensemble in one's life
	<b>Responsibility to process the thematic material of a creation and one's place in it, in the intervals between rehearsals, and to invest in strategies for remembrance and embodiment</b>
	knowing that despite being an amateur ensemble we can still embody and embrace a professional approach to our productions and to our rehearsal procedures and values
	<b>Thematic consistency despite improvisational practice</b>
Shared authority: Decision-making and hierarchy in the creative process	<b>Need for guidance and direction in the dance making</b>
	<b>Compositional adjustment to address varying capabilities</b>
	Balance of reflection and discussion with dance practice
Sustainability	Integration of new members
	Commitment to weekly practice
	Assuming creative and administrative tasks



Picture 9 ArtRose Performance *Mut und Gnade*

Photo: Merker

The issues of contention marked in bold in the table above are the conditions that required the greatest amount of clarification, consensus, and recalibration during the post-performance discussions, as these were the ones that significantly influenced the creative process in the making of *Mut und Gnade*. Although our dance practice is embedded in improvisation, the dancers insist that all productions include a group expression of unity. The pattern of set material in *Mut und Gnade* that was more complex in its spatial orientation than those in the past, as directionality was an overriding theme of the dance. Practicing improvisation does not support the learning and reproducing of set material and spatial design, and therefore this scene of set material is always the most challenging for the performers. I notice that for many in the ensemble cognitive process overtake the body knowledge; thereby, reducing

kinaesthetic sensitivity and sensory discrimination. The result is that ingrained anxieties of 'getting it right arise', that may end in confusion and frustration<sup>71</sup>.

All dancers in the new work were asked to take responsibility to make their own decision about if and to what degree they wanted to participate in this short and final scene. My invitations to take responsibility were always coupled with the remainder that one's action has consequences for the group. I declined to take responsibility for the individual members as this action would have put me in the position of power and authority. Fortunately, several days before the performance five dancers decided to reduce the amount of their involvement in this last scene. The scene was revised, and despite revision included everyone. Issues that arose out of this incidence concerned the degree of my intervention in the decision-making processes and the responsibility of each dancer to process the scores and material of the work in the intervals between rehearsals. This problematic demonstrated the necessity for and consequences of self-regulation in decision making processes. Had I to have assumed the sole directorship and authority in the *ArtRose* ensemble, it would no longer be a 'community in dance'.

Although I stress that this community of dance is grounded in self-direction – everyone, professional and amateur – profits from artistic direction and support. My vision of such a community as a completely horizontal way of sharing – administratively, artistically, and socially – is perhaps utopian. I recognize that the group- in their individual places of development with the work rely on the clarity of my direction and the manner that it is transmitted. However, I have learned that giving clear direction does not necessarily mean taking control. As such this fact does not dismantle *ArtRose's* legitimacy as a 'community in dance'.

The restaging of the work *Mut und Gnade*, for two guest performances at the festival FELDspiel in Berlin nine months later gave everyone in the ensemble the opportunity to put into practice the recalibration of the *ArtRose* community in dance. Decision

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<sup>71</sup> Strategies in the form of video material, music, and operational charts to help the dancers remember and assimilate the patterns were offered to all with varying degrees of success.



making, responsibility and authority both organizationally and artistically were straightforwardly shared.

After the production of *Mut und Gnade* the *ArtRose* ensemble 'had to begin again', building on the experience of the past. Our ability to be 'able to begin again' was evidenced through the restaging and performance of the work and its positive resonance in both performers and public in Berlin, September 2019.

## 7.8 Conclusion



Picture 11 *ArtRose* Performance *Mut und Gnade*

Photo: Merker

Facilitating the *ArtRose* ensemble means for me to support a space for the expression of the dancers' submerged histories and unmet desires through the dance of our bodily becoming. In the beginning nine- and one-half years ago there was a mood of hesitancy to venture beyond the known and comfortable decorum's for older adults; the normative social and cultural etiquette that include dancing with moderation: in

tempo, intensity, and risk, never venturing on the floor and never to bold. The *ArtRose* ensemble is free from prescriptive rules evidenced with the fact that dancers are now using the floor, performing in outside site-specific spaces, exchanging with students at the Palucca University and with members of the community in monthly workshops in Hellerau. The improvisational practice of the *ArtRose* ensemble savours the resonance of physical contact; the giving, receiving, and sharing of weight.

It is this freedom that allows for new combinations of the social connective, a place where affective and creative formats can meet, and in the cooperative action can attain something special and individual, together. The *ArtRose* community in dance is a cultural practice of an artistic and social connective.

Through the years the dancers have experienced what it means to be in relation to one another on stage. The dancers do not play to the audience; they are creating a body-worlding (Manning 2012: 23) in performance. With some dancers I experience more full body movement and enhanced vocabulary; in others I observe increased expressivity albeit less physical dexterity. What I notice in all is their confidence to follow their own interests in practice and performance in a manner of artistic independence supported by the interdependence of the group.

The ethics of the turning motion of Buber's *I-It* and *I-Thou* dialectic guide the way the members of *ArtRose* relate with one another. We all experience the objectification of dealing with the daily affairs of the ensemble and experience moments of what Buber calls *inspiredness, or spirit finding form* while dancing together and at moments before an audience. We do not strive for consensus or sameness, differences are welcome. Actions are taken in recognition of both self-responsibility and for the consequences these actions may have for the community. At times decisions are taken and choices are made that are unfavourable for individuals in the group. In fact, the communicative procedures that accommodate each person's voice, significantly extend the timeline for the making of a dance. However, acknowledging and learning from the consequences of all decisions keeps our dialogue, mediated by the permission to be what we are, and the confirmation of the difference of others, open

to a meeting in acceptance and valuation of the others that can lead to the experience of the locus of value inside oneself. Living Buber's philosophy in the *ArtRose* community places full responsibility on the individual to expand in oneself to meet the other.

'Living Dialogue' does not need the spoken word to find its reality. Attentive silence recognizes the eternal silent background of being and dialogue (Avnon, 1998: 33). Therefore, silence can be appreciated as the welcoming acceptance of the other. The shared dance between members of *ArtRose* proceeds in attentive, embodied, and reciprocal dialogue, in the silence of the movement. Dancing together we experience the fluctuation between the doing and being. Moments of genuine dialogue emerge unannounced singularly, in a duo, or group when the quality of attention has been cultivated so that ego or conscious mind can release its will to impose or to create a situation. Becoming more sensitive to ourselves allows a presence to fill our beings that finds its expression in a state of grace with another.

For Buber, the perpetual turning between expansion and distancing is one that implies elasticity. The expansion in oneself and the turning to another with trust and commitment invites the numinous or grace to enter the dance. Erin Manning so eloquently states: 'Grace is the becoming dance of the step, when walking flows in the between of directions where holes become emergent openings rather than missed opportunities' (2010: 30). These are moments of movement carried by the rhythms of relation. 'The essence of relational movement is the creation of a virtual node, an in-between that propels the dance, that in-forms the grace that is not strictly of the body but of movement itself' (Manning 2012: 31).

The practical submission of this thesis; the dance *Mut und Gnade* dealt with grace of relational practice. Its improvisational score provided the temporal and spatial conditions for the dancers to enter and to dwell in the communicative place of the in-between, enabling relations to unfold unoppressed, with commitment, awareness, trust,

and pleasure. The quality of being and dancing together rather than the actual executed movements endowed the performance with its communicative import. Coming into relation quietened uncertainties surrounding the performative situation that supported the performers to move beneath the doing of the performance, to the essence of encounter. These were unprotected encounters of dialogical being. I know as a performer that genuine moments of *I-Thou* encounter transpired during these performances before a 'listening' public.

The energy of our presence brought forth form; embodied communication transpired in the world that we were creating in-the-between, cultivating presence and embodied awareness. Somatic icon, Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen, describes embodiment as

'automatic presence, clarity and knowing [...] the cells awareness of themselves [...] It is a direct experience; there are no intermediary steps of translation [...] There is complete knowing. There is peaceful comprehension. Out of this embodiment process emerges feeling, thinking, witnessing, understanding. The source of this process is love' (1993: 63-64).

It is exactly the feeling of love that arises in these moments of genuine dialogue in the *ArtRose* community expressed by an ensemble member as: 'Dancing is for me the elixir of life, the practised love of human existence' (March 2020).

Will and grace are both active and passive. The spiritual is the coming to wholeness and actuality in the here and now of a moment within oneself, being with one's inborn *Thou* facilitated by an *I-Thou* relationship of spontaneous mutuality, the movement of turning to another. One finds within oneself the sensitivity to detect genuine relation with other(s) and then the courage to act in relation both in pairs and in a group.

Transformation begets from the struggle and conflict that arises from identifying with both sides, in which things and persons 'neither exist in rigid separation, nor melt into one another, but reciprocally condition themselves' (Buber 1901: 253). Somatic scholars propose that somatic sensitivity dwells in the individual in relation to other(s) and manifests itself at the junction of possibility and reality (Williamson 2016, Eddy 2014, Kampe 2015). The improvisational practice of *ArtRose* inspired by the spirit of Buber's dialectic, somatic and phenomenological methodology, helps the ensemble

members to dwell in sentient, receptive and intuitive bodies, of presence – transitional and fleeting - of self-realization facilitated by an encounter of silent dialogue, as in community one realizes oneself (Buber 2010).

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion



*ArtRose Practice Photo: Merker*

This thesis put forth the modalities of the dance practice and performance in the *ArtRose* ensemble as a site of artistic, ethical, socio-political, and educational potentialities. Its scholarship bridged dance practice with interdisciplinary fields of enquiry to investigate the multi-layers of meaning in the *ArtRose* community. The research aimed to forge a place for the recognition and acceptance of dance art with older adult amateurs in Dresden and the greater cultural landscape. It investigated dance as a somatic and embodied practice of expressivity and as a bond for the

building and sustaining of a self-governing community. The research led to a reconceptualization of dance in the community, to a 'community in dance'. Research questions addressed how a contemporary interpretation of the 20<sup>th</sup> century German form of *Ausdruckstanz* (expressionist dance) facilitated through the principles and strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® in the *ArtRose* practice could support both the creativity and artistic expression of the dancers and the development of personal and collective agency and affect. Its subtext questioned the degree to which applications of the Feldenkrais Method® in the practice could proceed without compromising the method's integrity. Further questions considered the impact of ethical, social, and political factors that condition the autonomy, governance and sustainability of the *ArtRose* community and addressed the cultural politics of the place for performing ensembles of amateur adult dancers in Dresden. The research has answered these questions through a rigorous integration of practice, theory construction and reflection.

The research revealed that the ethics of our relational practice and performance is that what drives the *ArtRose* ensemble forward and enables its continuity. The ethics of the community espouse equitable, reciprocal, and empathetic relations between its members. The practice invited, and continues to invite, an unfolding of personal spirituality and of coming into relation that Martin Buber describes as *inspiredness*. Both the questions and aims of this practice-as-research probed the interdependence of a practice of relation and a practice of dance, or a kind of selfing (Beringer 1985) together.

Each chapter of this thesis explored the *ArtRose* community from distinct yet interrelated perspectives. The Introduction outlined its general argument, stated the research questions, and demonstrated the trajectory taken to arrive at the research design. Chapter 2 offered the contextual framework of the thesis through a description of the research field and the nature of the *ArtRose* community. Furthermore, it unfolded its epistemological and ontological assumptions, interdisciplinary thought and mixed-methods procedures consolidated in a philosophical, phenomenological, and heuristic perspective. The choice for the two-fold methodological imperative of

this thesis, Participant Action Research and practice-as-research was predicated on the necessity for my full participation and embodied scholarship in the research field to fully experience, understand and evaluate the work. Chapter 3 addressed the amateur sector of dance in the German cultural context and offered a historical account of *Ausdruckstanz* and the rationale for identifying the *ArtRose* ensemble as a ‘community in dance’ rather than a Community Dance project. Chapter 4 considered the question of how the social constitution of the ensemble empowers its ability to maintain both autonomy and sustainability. This enquiry sourced from the social philosophies of John Dewey, Hannah Arendt, Étienne Wenger and Jean Lave, whose practice led theories are embedded in experiential education and reciprocal pathways of communication and action. Wenger and Lave’s, ‘Communities of Practice’ offered this research a practical scaffolding for identifying the factors that support the forming of a community, and the strategies for the integration of new members. Dewey’s philosophy of democracy and education spoke to the individual and collective proceduralism and communicative processes in the *ArtRose* ensemble as ‘the cooperative interaction in public will [...] and its formation is both the means and the end of self-realization’ (Honneth 2014: 258). Arendt’s call to communicative action offered an argument for the socio-political significance of dance art with older amateur adults in Germany’s cultural mainstream and the contribution that the *ArtRose* ensemble could offer in this context. Chapter 5 unfolded the ethical foundation of this thesis expressed through Buber’s ‘Living Dialogue’. The resonance of being and acting in the spirit of Buber’s dialogic filled the relational dance practice in the *ArtRose* ensemble with a feeling of personal spirituality that brought everyone into states of relation with others. Thereby, this chapter underscored the question of how the ethics of *ArtRose* impact on personal spirituality and condition communicative processes of interaction. Chapter 6 delineated the tenets, principles, and modes of practice of the Feldenkrais Method®. It put forth the *why and how* for its application in the *ArtRose* practice in the constructing of idiosyncratic expressive movement vocabularies and for the supporting of individual and collective agency and affect in the ensemble. The pivotal and most complex chapter of this thesis Chapter 7 described the intricacies of



the *ArtRose* ensemble and thereby wove the interrelated threads of this thesis together. This chapter addressed intersubjective learning, creating, and performing in the socio-ethical connectivity in the *ArtRose* ensemble that brought forth existential questions about acting from the freedom of choice expressed in the improvised performance of the dance work, *Mut und Gnade*, the practical submission of this thesis. Whilst this thesis is undeniably written from the perspective of my role in the ensemble, it includes both self-reflectivity as a criterion for validation (Lincoln and Guba 1985: 308-309) and the voices of the ensemble members and critical friends that tender reliability to my evaluation of the research as expressed in Chapter 7 and in the Appendix 5. Finally, the performance was the ultimate validation of the research and this artefact speaks for itself.

The practice-based, experiential theories, philosophies and methodologies of Dewey, Arendt, Buber, and Feldenkrais are all social-somatic ontologies that address educational-socio-ethical and political connectivity that support and facilitate individual creativity, development, learning and change. The concept of facilitation has often been referred to as originating with Dewey's 1916 work, *Democracy and Education* (Hogan 2002). In this work Dewey discussed that the facilitator does not aim to provide answers, rather the goal is to give participants opportunities to investigate concepts as collaborators or co-creators, that allow for content to emerge from the participants' shared experiences. Dewey's experiential learning framework coupled with his idea of democratic associations give the directives for the continuity and functional workings of a group. His method of reflective practice and Arendt's notion of promise and forgiveness in interpersonal relations guide the *ArtRose* community in negotiating problems and difficulties. Arendt's plaidoyer for purposive action locates the ensemble in the political domain as our practice and performance not only makes visible dance art with older non-trained adult amateurs in Dresden, but also advocates for the recognition and legitimacy of concert dance with older adult amateurs in the German cultural community. Weekly practice and performance events, members participation in dance symposiums, conferences, and workshops in the city and through the *ArtRose* community outreach workshops as part of the European Centre of

the Arts Hellerau's programme demonstrates that the *ArtRose* ensemble has begun to carve out a place for the voices and dances of older amateurs in Dresden.

Bridging the principles and methods of the Feldenkrais Method® and Buber's 'Living Dialogue' in the *ArtRose* community endow the work with honesty and clarity in artistic expression. Buber's philosophy guides the ethics of this community. The Feldenkrais Method® offers the practical strategies for the building of individual movement personalities through attuning to and (re)calibrating one's own movement potential. Buber and Feldenkrais were raised in the Hasidic Jewish tradition that values and hails the beauty of everyday activities. Their field of action is the movement of everyday life. This emphasis points towards a spiritual pragmatism of the ordinary as an integral and essential part of life. The Feldenkrais practitioner celebrates with awe and curiosity the multifarious variations in which to enact quotidian movement patterns and engages with a novelty in mindful repetition. Buber's 'Living Dialogue' is based in the oscillation between hallowing the repetitive rituals of the everyday interspersed with moments of genuine reciprocal relation. This is expressed in his concept of 'turning'. Buber's thought proposes that genuine relation is inseparable from the pragmatism of daily life. The forming of self-identity is facilitated only in relation to all things and beings with which one must do, and whose otherness persists in each caring environment (Berry 1985: 38). Feldenkrais proposes that in moments of awareness one can '[...] grasp that his small world and the great world around are but one, and that in this unity he is no longer alone' (1972: 54). Reverence and spirituality of the quotidian contained in Buber's dialogic and Feldenkrais' method are 'put to work' in the *ArtRose* community through embodied practice. An outcome of this integration has led to the forming of the artistic signature of the ensemble, a poetic of the everyday gesture, of simplicity. In practice and performance of this ensemble ethics and aesthetics combine and need not be framed in the exceptional. The *ArtRose* 'community in dance' rotates between celebrating the simplicity and at once the expressivity of everyday gesture in dance, both individually and in relation, and in fulfilling the everyday tasks that engender the continuity of the community. Its methods and manners of expression are transparent and transferable for others.

The practice in this ensemble intertwines principles and strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® with dance improvisation. The Feldenkrais work was not used to prepare the dancers for their creative dance practice either by placing a lesson in Awareness through Movement (ATM) at the beginning of the practice, or to reflect upon the practice by placing an ATM at the end of the practice. These are the strategies most often utilized in the integration of Feldenkrais in dance practice. I sought novel ways to interface the two so that the Feldenkrais strategies became the tools of the practice. As such, this manner of application addressed the research question of the extent to which the Feldenkrais Method®, could be integrated into the dance practice without compromising the integrity of the method itself. To assess the impact of this merger, survey questions and interviews were undertaken with members of the ensemble and supportive friends. These interviews were conducted to find out how the participants recognized the work with the Feldenkrais Method® in the dance practice; and if they could differentiate its practical applications from other learning tools. In addition, the survey questioned if the intervention with the Feldenkrais Method® was deemed useful in the dance practice of the students. Responses (see Appendix 5) confirmed that the Feldenkrais principles and strategies were both recognized and valued as a method of learning and that its benefits led several ensemble members to participate in ATM lessons supplementary to their dance practice.

Working with the Feldenkrais Method® offered the dancers clear and easily accessible structures or scores of everyday movements that invited all to forge their own paths in dance improvisation, modifying and varying the tasks according to individual needs. The strategies of this method support both the improvement of what one already can do and invite the dancer to find a myriad of ways to execute the 'same thing'. The movement explorations all begin from the same place; however, the freedom of individual invention can lead each dancer to find h/er own unique expression.

Additionally, an aim was to notice how the forming and experimenting with one's own idiosyncratic movement personality and vocabulary powered by the strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® could be drawn into relation with others. The methods empowered the dancers to develop their own movement vocabularies and tested

degrees of individualisation for learning or improving skill sets as: moving easily in and out of the floor, sharing weight, increasing the mobility of the torso, and remembering and executing, at times, pre-determined patterns of movement. In survey questions that addressed this combination, members responses revealed that precisely the opportunity to construct ones' own creative movement voice supported through the strategies of the Feldenkrais Method® enhanced openness and curiosity to learn from, and to share with others.

In the *ArtRose* community the manner of dance practice and performance is a first experience with somatically informed improvisational *Ausdruckstanz* for most of its members. No one carried with them inscribed histories of former dance experiences with different dance styles and techniques. Perhaps this allowed the dancers more freedom for exploration as they did not attempt to (de or re) construct past experiences. This form of dance deals with both the expression of one's senate world that unfolds through a personal dancing voice and the expression of the community spirit of the dancers thus making it inherently somatic but not necessarily improvisational. Contemporary *Ausdruckstanz* dance and the Feldenkrais Method® point towards self-directed learning and creative invention. My research shows that this allowed the dancers more freedom for exploration as they did not attempt to (de or re) construct experience.

The practice in this ensemble transformed everyday motion into a dance poetic that expressed one's emotions and feelings in an individual and idiosyncratic manner and turned towards dialogue with others. Its practice is open for all as it is not predicated on any physical skill. Working with the Feldenkrais Method® offered the dancers practical and accessible tools for generating yet unknown movement potentialities and developing the material in the form of a scored improvisational dance. As I have yet to experience another group of older adult amateurs in Germany that interface the Feldenkrais Method® and an expressionist and improvisational dance practice and performance with older non-trained adults, I venture to claim that thesis presents a first reading of this form of dance and therefore offers an original contribution to Germany's cultural landscape today.

This research has demonstrated that the performance practice is vital for both the development of artistry, the deep satisfaction that sharing with a public brings to the performers, and for the strengthening of the community. As described in Chapter 7, many dancers voiced that preparing for performances is a highly motivating in terms of the recognition that is received through audience response and for the valuation and respect they receive as a 'dancer' from family and friends. Indeed, the weekly practice is a tuning of the performance skills of awareness, of initiation and response, and of dance creation. Each practice is composed of mini dance creations as we do not practice steps or prescribed patterns of movement, we practice dance in relation. As all members are agents in the creative process of weekly practice a logical outgrowth of that what is creatively formed in the practice find its expression in performance before an audience. Thus, the performance practice is decidedly a unifying element for the ensemble and makes this expression of dance art visible in the community. The making and performance of *Mut und Gnade* spanned the course of one year. Meeting only once a week created conditions in the making of this work that were, at times, tedious, inefficient and conflict ridden. Communities need conflict for developing resilience and for opening channels of negotiation. Without the conflict and the uneasy times, the community in dance, *ArtRose* would not change or grow. We looked to finding ways to engage with problems so that all voices could be heard and solutions to problems found in which everyone could feel acknowledged. The ensemble revised its rehearsal plan in preparation for a guest performance of the same work nine months later in Berlin. This revision included a significant increase in rehearsal time commitment from the performers two weeks before the performance. This change proved satisfying for all.

There is a growing audience for this form of dance practice and performance in Dresden evidenced by the growing number of participants in the *ArtRose* workshops powered by the European Centre of the Arts, Hellerau and full houses at the *ArtRose* performance events. People have joined the group after participating in workshop(s) or attending performance events. The ensemble cannot accommodate all who wish to join. However, without the support and inclusion of amateur older adult ensembles

like *ArtRose*, in the programming of mainstream performance venues in Dresden this ensemble, and similar ensembles of older amateur adults like it, will remain underrepresented and marginalized due to the irregularity of performance events, few venues in which to perform, and the yet non-existing financing of their productions. There are not only people who wish to perform this form of dance, but also people who wish to see it. Future research could point to a recalibration of expectations for performance and the *who* and *how* of spectatorship to reassess aesthetic and artistic value.

A significant finding of this research is a reconceptualization of 'dance' and 'community' from dance in the community or Community Dance to a community in dance. A 'community in dance' reverses the more common idea of taking dance into a community group, to provide a cultural, physical, social, artistic or well-being experience of dance, to a 'community in dance' that forms because of the committed action of its members to share a dance art practice and performance in community. Collaborative and relational practice can lead to the sustaining of a community when the manner of collaboration is one of shared responsibility, authority, and decision-making processes. As evidenced with the *ArtRose*, these factors can produce a profound sense of belonging and identity in community, leading to its members committed engagement for its continuity. The determining factors for a 'community in dance' include democratic self-governance, distributed responsibility and leadership, cooperative choreographic processes, reciprocal pathways of communication, and an ethics of relation. Its members develop individual artistic expressivity not next to or in the presence of others in the community, but in relation to the others, so that the community develops a unique artistic-social-ethical signature out of the exchange of unspoken dialogue through movement. This is a process that I argue is a contribution to rethinking the way in which community groups who dance can form, operate, and practice. A cooperative choreographic process is not about a single leader or professional making a dance *with* the members of the group, it is about making together throughout, from beginning to end. In this sense the practice and performance of the *ArtRose* community aligns with with the proposal of sociologist

Pierre Bourdieu that states artistic practice has '[...] the possibility of being collectively orchestrated without being the project of the organizing action of the conductor' (1977: 278). Sustainability is enabled through collaborative leadership, not the responsibility and motor of a single person so that the practice is neither predicated on the imposition of the explicit control of a single practitioner nor of a singular artistic signature. I am fully aware of the tensions that can arise in a community of distributed leadership as *ArtRose* and my roles as facilitator, researcher and performer and acknowledge the potential power structures therein; however the community's methods powered by Dewey's idea of democratic association, Feldenkrais's concept of mature behaviour and Buber's ethical relations have enabled me to mitigate these problematics with varying degrees of success and to stand by my argument that the term 'community in dance' is appropriate and effective. A community in dance is not a singular idea of the *ArtRose* ensemble and can be adapted by others in a variety of practices. A 'community in dance' demands personal and collective responsibility, that empower of all its members to act as necessary agents for its sustainability and for its creativity. Without engagement, openness, wholeheartedness and a desire for genuine relation, the community would not exist.

A 'community in dance' is enacted in relation - in fulfilling the tasks that support the community's ongoingness - and in coming into relation through the dance, as 'human experience depends, formatively and constitutively on the dynamic coupling of self and other in empathy' (Thompson 2005: 263).

The *ArtRose* community in dance is forging out a place for dance art with older amateurs in Dresden through its practice, performance, and workshop offerings, and through engagement in the Initiative Dance Art & Elders in the greater cultural community. Despite the dedicated work of individual communities and groups, the sector of dance art with older amateur adults has not yet built a political lobby nor is it a part of the country's socio-cultural-political discussion. Most of dance opportunities in Germany for older adult amateurs are those in which the practice revolves around dance as a healthy exercise, well-being, and sociability, rather than as an expression of aesthetics and art. Therefore, the artistry and artistic potential of older amateur adults

who work from a standpoint of professionalism have yet to be adequately recognized as one that can offer a meaningful contribution to the cultural currency of Germany. As discussed in Chapter 3, there is growing presence of dance and aging regarding older professional dancers. Amateurs and simply older dancing people aiming to create and perform expressions of dance art have been practically left out of this equation. Therefore, future research in this field might critically reflect about age in regard to an aesthetics of simplicity and valuation of beauty and expressivity of age in performative contexts. Learning and living somatically is to pay attention to one's lived body experiences as they play out in daily life, in relation to our capacities for understanding the world, our social and cultural practices as well as are our intersubjective and ethical engagements. The dance in the *ArtRose* 'community in dance' resonates with the sentient spirituality of the everyday. This thesis comes to an end with the voice of *ArtRose* member Werner Koch. His poem, 'Tanzen' (Dancing) expresses the spirit of the dance that is the heart of this thesis.

*We dare.*  
*Anyone can do it, we can do it.*  
*You can do it too*  
*Dancing is Life,*  
*The language of the soul*  
*Joy, happiness, also pain and toil.*  
*Dance begins in the head and ends in the feet,*  
*Dance is elation and passion*  
*is pleasure and discipline*  
*Culture and Education.*

*Yes, we wish to dance.*  
*Closing our eyes, we sway ourselves quietly,*  
*We ground ourselves and begin to circle*  
*and loosening our limbs we discover ourselves again.*



*We breathe freedom,  
the freedom of being.  
Looking to the sky, we feel ourselves rise.  
We aspire upwards, upwards until we float  
We float and dance  
We are alive.....  
(translation from the German, Brandt and Coogan)*

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1.

#### **Statement of Data Protection in the PhD thesis of Jenny\_Coogan: *Community in Dance: Somatic Learning at the Interface of Somatic Dance and the Feldenkrais Method®***

##### **Brief Description of the Project**

This research focuses on the interrelation of individual and collective agency and affect, and social responsibility in the facilitation of individual artistic growth and the sustainability in the *ArtRose* ensemble. The research questions address how the practice and performance of improvised somatic dance in this environment can engender a transformative and unique corporeality in the *ArtRose* ensemble that can forge a place for concert dance with older non-trained adults in greater cultural landscape of Germany.

##### **The following methods of data gathering will be used:**

- Survey of *ArtRose* members in audio recording and in written form,
- Video documentation of practice and performance,
- Semi-structured Audio interviews of *ArtRose* members,
- Text responses of *ArtRose* members to surveys and questionnaire,
- Video recordings of dance practice, rehearsals and performance of the members of the *ArtRose* Ensemble,
- Photos,
- Text responses of participant observers.

Your data will only be collected for the research purposes mentioned above. All information collected in the course of the research will be treated confidentially. The data will not be passed onto third parties for other purposes unless you later renew your consent to your data being passed on in this way in a separate declaration of consent. The research will be published as an online PhD. The data will not reveal the identity of those contributing interview, text and video material. Your consent is voluntary. No disadvantages to you will arise if you refuse consent. You can revoke your consent until September 2020 and demand that your data be deleted or destroyed.

## Declaration of Consent

I \_\_\_\_\_ (first name surname)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (date of birth) declare that I have received information on the  
*ArtRose* research project, and I submit the following declaration of consent to taking  
part in the PhD study.

<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	I confirm that I have read and understood the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I am free to withdraw before September 2020.
<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	I understand that the information I provide will be treated confidentially.
<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	I agree to be filmed, photographed, recorded, and for citations of mine to be used as part of this research project.
<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	I agree for film, pictures, quotations and other information provide to be used in publications and presentations associated with this research project for educational and research purposes only.
<input type="checkbox"/> yes <input type="checkbox"/> no	I agree to take part in the research project.

\_\_\_\_\_ (place, date) -  
\_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

## Appendix 2.

Practice as Research documentation (video documentation is in a separate OneDrive submission)



**MUT  
UND  
GNADE**  
Ensemble ArtRose

ArtRose und Gäste mit fünf Choreographien  
im Zeichen des Ausdruckstanzes

**03./04.11.2018 um 19:00**  
Labortheater Dresden  
Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Gützstraße 34, 01307 Dresden  
Eintrittspreise: 10€/6€/3€ nur an der Abendkasse  
[www.tanzensemble-artrose.de](http://www.tanzensemble-artrose.de)

Eine Produktion von ArtRose e.V. in Kooperation mit der  
Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden mit Unterstüt-  
zung der Barbara und Claus Heyde-Stiftung Dresden.

Choreographien von:  
ArtRose/Jenny Coogan, Massimo Gerardi/subsTANZ &  
Julija Rusevica

Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden





## Das Ensemble **ArtRose** und Gäste

Fünf Choreographien  
im Zeichen des Ausdrucktanzes  
Gesamtleitung Prof. Jenny Coogan

Der Abend ist in herzlicher Zuneigung gewidmet  
Werner Koch, einem Gründungsmitglied  
Des Ensembles ArtRose

## Tanzensemble ArtRose

ArtRose gründete sich im Januar 2011 durch eine Initiative von Jenny Coogan, Professorin für zeitgenössischen Tanz an der Palucca Hochschule für Tanz Dresden. Ausgangspunkt ist das Credo, dass ein Jeder seinen Tanz ergründen kann. Zehn Dresdner Bürgerinnen und Bürger im Alter (60+) fanden sich zusammen, um gemeinsamen einen Tanz zu entwickeln, der die Vitalität und Expressivität im reiferen Alter zelebriert und aufführt. Inzwischen besteht die Gruppe aus 18 Mitwirkenden. Mut und Gnade ist die siebente Uraufführung der Gruppe. Die kreativen Prozesse des Ensembles sind durch die somatische Methodologie der Feldenkrais-Methode, in Kombination mit explorativen Bewegungsaufgaben und tänzerischen „improvisation scores“ gesteuert. Diese Kombination erzeugt Bedingungen, in denen alle Beteiligten ihre persönliche Relevanz finden und die Weisheit und Handlungsfähigkeit ihres Selbst in Relation zu den anderen erkennen und anerkennen. An diesen Prozessen nehmen alle als Co-Autoren/Co-Autorinnen teil. Durch die Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Genres und mit jungen Tänzerinnen und Tänzern ist inzwischen ein lebhaftes, generationsübergreifendes Zusammenspiel zwischen Tänzer\*innen, Musiker\*innen und bildenden Künstler\*innen entstanden.

Herzlichen Dank an: die Bürgerstiftung Dresden, Ronald Scheurich, und das Team der HfBK, die Palucca Hochschule für Tanz, Henning Merker, Massimo Gerardi, und an alle Tänzer\*innen und Mitwirkende für ihren Mut und die Gnade, dass diese Produktion realisiert werden konnte.

„Mut und Gnade“ ist eine Produktion von ArtRose e.V. in Kooperation mit der Hochschule für Bildende Künste Dresden. Unterstützt von der Bürgerstiftung Dresden aus Mittel der Barbara & Claus Heyde-Stiftung.  
[www.tanzensemble-artrose.de](http://www.tanzensemble-artrose.de)

„Clash“ ist eine Produktion von subSTANZ/Dresden in Kooperation mit dem Deutschen Hygiene-Museum Dresden. Gefördert durch das Amt für Kultur und Denkmalschutz Dresden.  
[www.massimo-gerardi-substanz.de](http://www.massimo-gerardi-substanz.de)



## Mut und Gnade

Konzeption, Inszenierung und künstlerische Leitung: Jenny Coogan  
Tanz von und mit: Tanja Braumann, Irene Braun, Jenny Coogan, Wilhelma Esche, Herta Hopf, Eckart König, Franziska Kusebauch, Gabriele Mägel, Renate Merker, Karin Preuß, Georg Saager, Ioanna Skokou, Anita Weber, Harald Weisswange, Ila Zimmerling

Musik: Sascha Mock (Originalkomposition), Nik Bärtsch, John Lurie;  
Live-Improvisation Violine: Aline Gropper  
Bühnenbild, Kostüme Djamila Brandt, Hans Werner  
Licht, Projektion, Requisite: Djamila Brandt, Hans Werner, Jenny Coogan, Franziska Kusebauch (Stoffe)

Die Ikone des Ausdrucktanzes Mary Wigman schrieb: „es war schön immer wieder von vorne Anfangen-Müssen, aber auch Anfangen-Können“ (Die Sprache des Tanzes, 1963). Das Tanzstück Mut und Gnade reflektiert diese Aussage aus der Perspektive, den Mut zu haben loszulassen, um neu beginnen zu können und dabei Ungewissheit und Instabilität zuzulassen; und die Gnade des Seins in wechselseitigen Begegnungen mit anderen zu erleben. Im Mut sind unsere Impulse stark und eindrücklich. In der Gnade werden wir getragen und gehalten. Durch die Interaktion des Individuums in der Gemeinschaft wird eine verkörperte Resonanz, eine Verschiebung der Emotionalität und ein in der Gruppe Getragen-, und Gehaltensein sichtbar gemacht.

## PAUSE

**Hexentanz** Von Holger Bey nach einer Vorlage von Mary Wigman

Tanz: Ben Beppler  
Musik: Boris Bell

Mary Wigmans Stil ist expressiv und dramatisch. Zu ihren bekanntesten Choreografien gehört der „Hexentanz“. Er wurde 2006 von Holger Bey choreographisch nachempfunden und ist bis heute an der Palucca Hochschule für Tanz Dresden durch Nachstudierungen erlebbar.

## Untersuchung/Research

Choreographie und Tanz: Julija Rusevica  
Musik: Aline Gropper, Live-Improvisation Violine

Eine Choreographie-Allegorie. Ein Mensch, der sich selbst untersucht und durch Selbstzerstörung nach dem inneren „Ich“ sucht. Letztendlich ist man kein Individuum mehr, sondern Teil von einem endlosen, ewigen Etwas, das sich ständig entwickelt, zerstört, teilt, wieder wächst und neu kreiert.

## Table Dance

Choreographie: Massimo Gerardi  
Tanz: Ben Beppler  
Musik: Pan Sonic

## Ausschnitt aus „Clash“

Konzeption, Choreographie und Setting: Massimo Gerardi  
Tanz und choreogr. Mitarbeit: Wael Marghni und Jonathan Reimann  
Musik: Johann Sebastian Bach, Nik Bärtsch

Ein tunesischer und ein deutscher Tänzer begegnen sich. Ist dabei das Echo des Kolonialismus aus Sicht der Kultur noch präsent? Der spontane Zugang zum zeitgenössischen Tanz in Tunesien und der institutionalisierte, eher intellektuelle zeitgenössische Tanz in Europa sind zwei verschiedene Welten. Der „Clash der Kulturen“ wird zum Impuls für das gegenseitige Erforschen.

## **Apendix 2.1**

### **Additional Performance Pictures**

*Mut und Gnade*, November 3 2018

All photo credits: Henning Merker

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### Appendix 3.

#### Performance Activities of the *ArtRose* from 2012-2019

- 19-20.09.2019: „*Mut und Gnade*“, FeldSpiel Festival, Berlin
- 03-04.11.2018: „*Mut und Gnade*“, Labortheater, Hochschule der Bildende Künste (HfBK) Dresden
- 25.6.2017: „*...und mein Garten schaute mir zu*“, Elbhangfest Dresden
- 06.5.2017: „*In each others tracks*“, Generationen-Tanz, Vielfalten im Dialog, Ludwigsburg
- 08.7.2016: „*Objects lie on a table*“, Labortheater HfbK Dresden
- 07.5.2016: „*In each other's tracks*“, Congress of Dance Medicine, Dresden
- 14.2.2016: „*In each others tracks*“, Veranstaltung Kunst des Erinnerns, Kulturrathaus Dresden
- 27.6.2015: „*Ganz im Geschmack*“, Elbhangfest Dresden
- 28.8.2014: „*Wege*“, Laboratorium La Rhythmique, Festspielhaus Hellerau
- 28.6.2014: „*Wege*“, Elbhangfest Dresden
- 14.5.2014: „*Lecture Demonstration*“, Laboratorium La Rhythmique III-Rhythmik Live, Festspielhaus Hellerau
- 23.2.2012: „*Small Moments of Greatness*“, Kongress des Feldenkraisverbandes Deutschland e.V., Berlin
- 6./7.5.2011: „*Small Moments of Greatness*“ Festspielhaus Hellerau, Linie 8





FELDSPIELPLAN			
TERMIN	STÜCK	→ ORT	
SAMSTAG, 14. SEPTEMBER	15:00 – 18:00	FESTIVALERÖFFNUNG mit Musik, Mitmach-Events und mit Grotest Maru: PROPELLER	→ FELD
	18:30 – 19:30	Seppe Baeyens   Ultima Vez: INVITED	→ WEISSE ROSE
SONNTAG, 15. SEPTEMBER	11:00 – 12:00	Seppe Baeyens   Ultima Vez: INVITED	→ WEISSE ROSE
	12:30 – 16:30	Jo Parkes: LINKED #1	→ FELD
	17:00 – 18:00	Sanja Frühwald: TIGER LILIEN	→ FELD
MONTAG, 16. SEPTEMBER	10:00 – 11:00	Sanja Frühwald: TIGER LILIEN	→ FELD
	14:00 – 15:00	Martin Nachbar: MÄNNER TANZEN	→ FELD
DIENSTAG, 17. SEPTEMBER	10:00 – 11:00	Martin Nachbar: MÄNNER TANZEN	→ FELD
MITTWOCH, 18. SEPTEMBER	17:00 – 18:00	Boris Hauf   Daniella Strasfogel: PLAY DATE	→ FELD
TERMIN	STÜCK	→ ORT	
DONNERSTAG, 19. SEPTEMBER	10:00 – 11:00	Tanzfuchs Produktion: PAPIERSTÜCK	→ FELD
	19:00 – 20:00	Jenny Coogan   ArtRose: WUT UND GNADE	→ FELD
FREITAG, 20. SEPTEMBER	10:00 – 11:00	Jenny Coogan   ArtRose: WUT UND GNADE	→ FELD
	17:00 – 18:00	Tanzfuchs Produktion: PAPIERSTÜCK	→ FELD
	19:00 – 20:00	Zirkusmaria: MEMORY LANE/ HAUS IN DEN BÄUMEN	→ FELD
SAMSTAG, 21. SEPTEMBER	10:00 – 18:00	OPEN SPACE → MENSA DER ST. FRANZISKUS SCHULE	
	17:00 – 18:00	Britt Hatzius: BLIND CINEMA	→ KIND ARSENAL
SONNTAG, 22. SEPTEMBER	15:00 – 16:00	Britt Hatzius: BLIND CINEMA	→ KIND ARSENAL
	16:30 – 17:30	Gabi dan Droste   Martin Nachbar: ZUSAMMEN BRAUEN	→ FELD



Samstag, 06.05.2017

- 11:00 - 13:00 WORKSHOP**  
Jo Parkes, Berlin  
„Linked 2017 – 2. Teil“  
3-teiliger Workshop (Siehe Freitag)
- 
- 11:00 - 13:00 WORKSHOP**  
Jenny Coogan, Dresden  
„Meeting in Dance for Anyone and Everyone: Feldenkrais inspired improvisation“
- 
- 13:00 - 14:00 PAUSE**
- 
- 14:00 - 15:30 LECTURE DEMONSTRATION**  
Jenny Coogan, Dresden  
Ein Einblick in die Praxis von „ArtRose“
- 
- 14:00 - 15:30 WORKSHOP**  
Jo Parkes, Berlin  
„Linked 2017 – 3. Teil“  
3-teiliger Workshop
- 
- WORKSHOP**  
Andrea Marton, München  
„Tanzlab von 10 bis 70“
- 
- 15:30 - 16:30 PAUSE**
- 
- 16:30 - 17:30 SHOWING**  
Ergebnisse aus den Workshops von Jo Parkes und Andrea Marton
- 
- 17:30 - 19:00 PAUSE**
- 
- 19:00 AUFFÜHRUNG**  
Silke Z. / resistdance  
„METABOLISTEN – Stoff wechseln“  
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## Appendix 3.1 Workshops

**HELLERAU**  
EUROPÄISCHES ZENTRUM DER KÜNSTE DRESDEN

**ArtRose Tanzworkshops**

**ArtRose / Jenny Coogan**

1x monatlich samstags 17-19 Uhr, ab 20 Uhr gemeinsamer Veranstaltungsbesuch\* • Informationen & Anmeldung: wetzel@hellerau.org  
\* Treffpunkt Besucherzentrum

[www.hellerau.org](http://www.hellerau.org)

© Andy Siegel

### Tanzworkshops

#### ArtRose / Jenny Coogan

ArtRose ist für alle ab 60 Jahren, die ihre Vitalität und Lebenslust auch tänzerisch zum Ausdruck bringen möchten. Vorkenntnisse oder besondere körperlichen Voraussetzungen sind nicht erforderlich, was zählt, ist Freude an Bewegung und gute Laune.

Das generationenübergreifende 60+-Community-Tanz-Ensemble ArtRose und HELLERAU laden ein, Bewegung und tänzerische Improvisation ohne körperliche Grenzen kennenzulernen nach dem Credo: „Jeder kann, unabhängig von Alter und Begabung, seinen Tanz ergründen.“

Prof. Jenny Coogan, Leiterin von ArtRose, ist seit 35 Jahren als Tänzerin, Choreografin und Dozentin international anerkannt, zuletzt als Professorin für Zeitgenössischen Tanz an der Palucca Hochschule für Tanz Dresden tätig. Durch Lehrverpflichtungen an diversen Universitäten in den USA und in Europa pflegt sie den ständigen Dialog über internationale Trends und Forschungen zur Lehr- und Lernpraxis. HELLERAU bietet zudem die Möglichkeit, mit Künstlerinnen und Künstlern ins Gespräch zu kommen, besondere Workshops mit ihnen zu erleben und Vorstellungen im Festspielhaus zu besuchen.

##### Sa 28.01. 17 Uhr

Workshop mit Jenny Coogan und Wen Hui und Jana Svobodová,\* anschließend Besuch der Vorstellung *Ordinary People* von Living Dance Studio & Archa Theatre (China/Tschechien)

##### Sa 18.02. 17 Uhr

Workshop mit Jenny Coogan und Mia Habis (Libanon), Tänzerin, Choreografin und Kuratorin des Festivals Mashreq to Maghreb anschließend Besuch der Vorstellung *Riding on a Cloud* von Rabi Mroué (Libanon)

##### Sa 25.03. 17 Uhr

Workshop mit Performern von Dorkypark, anschließend Besuch der Vorstellung *The Ghosts* von Constanza Macras/Dorkypark

##### Sa 22.04. 17 Uhr

Workshop mit Jenny Coogan, anschließend Besuch der Vorstellung *Collective Loss of Memory* von DOT504

##### Sa 27.05. 17 Uhr

Workshop mit Tänzern der Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company, anschließend Besuch der Vorstellung *Extinction of a minor species* der Dresden Frankfurt Dance Company

##### Sa 24.06. 17 Uhr

Workshop mit Tänzern der Batsheva Dance Company, anschließend Besuch der Vorstellung der Batsheva Dance Company



„Ich hätte nicht gedacht, dass ich das noch kann“

**ArtRose – Tanzworkshop**  
Bewegung und Tanz  
für alle Junggebliebenen über  
60 Jahre  
Nächste Termine: xx.10., xx.11.,  
xx.12.2020  
Infos und Anmeldung:  
workshop@hellerau.org



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Bei ArtRose treffen sich regelmäßig Menschen über 60 Jahre, um sich gemeinsam zu bewegen und zu improvisieren. Mit der Initiatorin Jenny Coogan, Professorin an der Palucca Hochschule für Tanz, sprach Moritz Kotzerke, Leiter Audience Development, Kulturelle Bildung und Netzwerke in HELLERAU.

#### Frau Coogan, wer oder was ist ArtRose?

ArtRose entstand im Januar 2011. Meine Mutter wurde gerade 80 und ich wollte ihr ein sehr besonderes Geschenk machen. Als Tänzerin, Choreografin und Leiterin einer eigenen Company habe ich mir gedacht: Wieso nicht ein Tanzstück mit Leuten entwickeln, die anheimelnd in ihrem Alter sind? Und so habe ich ein paar Bekannte angesprochen, deren äußerlicher Ausdruck mich interessiert hat. Daraus ist dann eine Gruppe entstanden und wir haben im Mai 2012 ein erstes Stück in HELLERAU aufgeführt. Die Gruppe hat einige Besonderheiten: Erstens geht es nicht um tänzerisches Können. Die meisten Teilnehmer\*innen haben sehr wenig Erfahrungen mit Tanz. Meist sind sie erst als Rentner\*innen zum Tanz gekommen. Zweitens: Die Gruppe ist kontinuierlich ohne Unterbrechung seit 2011 bestehen geblieben (sechs von den ursprünglich zehn Menschen sind auch heute noch dabei). Und drittens: Ich als Choreografin entwickle keine fertige Dramaturgie, sondern die Ideen entstehen aus der wöchentlichen Praxis der Gruppe. Das führt auch zu einer starken Authentizität auf der Bühne, und die Bewegungsformen, mit denen wir arbeiten, sind sehr divers.

#### Wie kam man sich ein Treffen der ArtRoses in HELLERAU konkret vorstellt?

Wir sind jetzt seit ungefähr drei Jahren einmal im Monat in HELLERAU. Am Anfang war es immer der feste Kern und es hat ein bisschen gedauert, bis auch neue Personen aus Dresden dazugekommen sind. Ich glau-

be, das Besondere ist, dass die Menschen sich aufgenommen fühlen und in einen Raum kommen, in dem jede\*r die Anerkennung von jede\*r bekommt. Die Trainings sind so aufgebaut, dass wir mit kleinen Aufwärmübungen anfangen. Beispielsweise versuchen wir, uns mit den Händen und unserem Atem viele Quellen zu bewegen und dafür Formen zu finden. Das geht manchmal so weit, dass man das Gefühl hat, dass der Atem von innen nach außen durch die Haut ströbt und wieder zurückgezogen wird. Diese Übungen zum Ankommen und Aufwärmen macht man auch mit professionellen Tänzer\*innen, sie werden vielleicht nur anders aufgenommen, die jede\*r es anders macht. Es sind sehr viele Kleingruppen- oder Partner\*innenübungen, es geht um das In-Kontakt-Kommen – nicht über-Hautkontakt, sondern über die Wahrnehmung der gemeinsamen Erkundung des Raumes. Es wird also mobilisiert, geknetet, Ebenen erkundet, alleine oder mit anderen. Aber nie mit einem wirklich vorgegebenen Material, das man lernen soll. Es gibt Aufgaben oder Ideen und dann finden wir Antworten zusammen in längeren Improvisationen.



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Sie kennen die Teilnehmer\*innen nun schon recht lange. Können Sie beschreiben, was diese Erfahrungen mit dem Tanz für die Teilnehmer\*innen bedeuten und was sie dort lernen?

Die Atmosphäre und der Raum zum Ausprobieren unterstützen, glaube ich, sehr die eigene Vorstellungskraft und Selbstwirksamkeit. Manche haben mir nach einigen Jahren gesagt, dass sie große Probleme mit Selbstkritik hatten und Angst, sich zu blamieren. ArtRose hat ihnen geholfen, diese Ängste loszuwerden. Bei anderen geht es eher um die körperlichen Fähigkeiten. Viele denken dann: „Wow, ich hätte nicht gedacht, dass ich das noch kann.“ Und das heißt jetzt nicht, dass man unglaublich virtuos ist, aber sie spüren ihre Fähigkeiten des künstlerischen Ausdrucks durch Tanz. Denn auch Gehen kann ein Tanz sein, wenn es voll von Intentionen, Ausdruck, Poesie ist. Eine ist Professor\*in an der Uni, und sie sagte, dass sie jetzt keine Angst mehr vor ihren Vorlesungen mit 400 Leuten hat.

Denken Sie, dass die Teilnehmer\*innen von ArtRose zeitgenössischen Tanz auch anders anschauen und wahrnehmen?

Viele sagen von sich, dass sich ihr Verständnis von zeitgenössischem Tanz durch ArtRose stark entwickelt hat. Sie schauen sich eine größere Vielfalt an Tanz an und finden bessere Zugänge für sich selbst. Wenn man seine künstlerische Sicht als Zuschauer\*in erweitert, dann entsteht die Möglichkeit, die eigenen Wahrnehmungsfähigkeit zu öffnen und Zugang zu unterschiedlichen Formen zu finden.

Das Besondere an ArtRose HELLERAU ist, dass die Leitung der Gruppe überwiegend die Gastkünstler\*innen übernehmen, die in HELLERAU spielen. Die Treffen sind meist nur eine Stunde vor Vorstellungsbeginn, und dann kann man die Stücke auf der Bühne meist noch erleben. Und es macht auch den Besuch gemeinschaftlicher, denn man hat vorher schon etwas mit anderen zusammen geteilt und man geht vor der Vorstellung vielleicht noch gemeinsam ins Restaurant oder in den Garten und kommt in Kontakt mit anderen und hat Austausch. Das ist für mich ein viel kompletteres Erlebnis von Tanz. Eben nicht nur in der Rolle der Zuschauenden.

Wie würde sich ArtRose in HELLERAU entwickeln, wenn du träumen dürftest? Und gibt es etwas, das du uns als Haus mit auf den Weg geben möchtest?

Natürlich würde ich es sehr toll finden, wenn wir mit ArtRose noch einmal in HELLERAU auftreten könnten. Es gibt ja immer wieder Schwerpunkte mit unterschiedlichen Gruppen, es gab aber noch nie ein Festival für ältere Menschen. Unsere Gesellschaft besteht nun mal zu einem großen Teil auch aus älteren Menschen und in dem Alter haben sie so viel in deren Körpern an Erfahrung, an künstlerischen Ausdruck. Alt heißt für mich: Was für Stoff! Was für Erlebnisse! Alles in einem leiblichen Körper.

Und ich glaube, dass es dafür auch ein Publikum gibt. Viele unserer Auftritte sind gut besucht. Viele ältere Menschen schauen sich das gerne an. Ich persönlich sehe das als einen gesellschaftlichen Gewinn, wenn ältere Tanzensembles nicht nur in Senior\*innenheimen oder Gemeinschaftsräumen etwas machen, sondern auch in den Räumen, in denen Kunst gezeigt wird, sichtbarer werden.



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## Appendix 4.

### List of thesis relevant publications and interviews

#### 1. Publications

- 2019 Chapter: 'Learning with the Feldenkrais Method of Somatic Education in the Dance Technique Class: A Case Study'. *The Feldenkrais Research Journal: The Feldenkrais Method and creativity* (6), 1-50
- 2018 Article: 'Somatic practice to dance students is what vegetables are to children' as part of the European Dancehouse Atelier: 'new approaches to dance training: is there a 'right' model? Network online forum
- 2017 Article: '„Wie ich mich bewege so bin ich“' Feldenkrais im künstlerischen Ausdruck und im sozialen Kontext'. *Feldenkrais Forum* 99, 16-21
- 2016 Editor and primary author: *Tanz Praktizieren, Eine Somatische Orientierung*. Berlin: Logos Verlag
- 2016 Editor and primary author: *Practicing dance: A Somatic Orientation*. Berlin: Logos Verlag
- 2016 Chapter: 'Reflected Praxis' in *Zwischenleiblichkeit und bewegtes Verstehen – Intercorporeity, Movement and Tacit Knowledge*. ed. by Eberlein, U. Berlin: transcript, 439-447
- 2014 Chapter: 'Small Moments of Greatness'. in *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft der TanzForschung: Tanz Zeit – Lebenszeit*. eds. by Berens, C., and Rosenberg, C. Leipzig: Henschel, 178-196

#### Joint Publications

- 2018 'Watching or Listening: How Visual and Verbal Information Contribute to Learning a Complex Dance Phrase'. *Frontiers in 'Psychology: Motor Science and Sport Psychology*. Bläsing, B., Coogan, J. Biondi, J., and Schack, T., 10.3389

#### 2. Interviews and Television spots

- 2020 The *ArtRose* Ensemble in Hellerau Magazine September 2020
- 2018 Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk (MDR), 'Tanz im Alter', the *ArtRose* ensemble, 4-minute documentary of the ensemble and footage from the premier of *Mut und Gnade*

#### 3. List of thesis relevant lectures, presentations, papers and attendance at conferences

- 2019 **International Body IQ Festival**, Berlin  
Lecture demonstration: 'Building Community in Dance through somatically informed dance art with elders', November
- 2018 **International Dancehouse Network 'Atelier'** Dublin, IRE  
Vocational dance training – is there a right model?  
Paper: Somatically Informed Pedagogy in Conservatory Contemporary Dance 'Technique' class: A Case Study, June

- 2018 **Annual Association Meeting of the German Feldenkrais Federation**, Fulda Germany, March
- 2018 **Zukunftslabor, Inklusion und Darstellende Künste in Sachsen**, Dresden  
Panel: Inklusion in der Ausbildung, December
- 2018 **Eurolab, Laban-Barteneiff Begegnungsanalyse Konferenz**, Remscheid  
Keynote: ,Verantwortung und Nachhaltigkeit in Tanzkunst in Alter‘, November
- 2018 **Bodily Undoing, Somatic Activism and Performance Culture**, Bath Spa University  
Lecture Workshop: Sustainability in a community of dance, September
- 2017 **Festival, Vielfalten** Ludwigsburg, artistic education and ageing,  
Lecture presentation: ‘Dance art in the ensemble *ArtRose*’, May
- 2017 **Conference Tanzkörper Erweiterung / Stretching the Physicality of Dance** hosted by tanzfähig, Dachverband Tanz, HZT Berlin  
Presentation of the Initiative, Tanz Kunst & Alter, August
- 2017 **Symposium, Gesellschaft für Tanzforschung: *Tanz, Diversität, Inklusion***, Dortmund, October  
Lecture: ,Wie ich mich bewege, so bin ich‘: Verantwortung und Nachhaltigkeit in Tanzkunst im Alter‘
- 2017 **Gesellschaft für Tanzforschung, *Pädagogische Forschungs-Methoden, Ergebnisse, Visionen***, University of Bochum, March  
Lecture: Somatische orientierte Ansätze in dem Tanzhochschulbereich
- 2017 **5th International Conference on Dance and Somatics**, Coventry, UK, July  
Workshop: Sustainability and Responsibility in the *ArtRose* ensemble
- 2016 **TaMed Kongress**, Gesundheitsförderung durch Tanz für Tanzende  
Lecture presentation: the *ArtRose* ensemble, May
- 2015 **3rd International Conference on Dance and Somatics**, ‘*Ethics and Repair*’, Coventry University, UK, July  
Workshop: ‘*Exploring the Feldenkrais Method as an ethical practice*’
- 2015 **Intelligence and Aktion III: Dance Engaging Science**, Universität Bielefeld, Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung  
Presentation of the results of the interdisciplinary research project: ‘*Dancing is more than just learning the Steps*’, November
- 2014 **Internationales Dalcroze Symposium**, Dresden  
Talk: ,Künstlerischer Tanz mit Älteren, Tanzimprovisation und der Feldenkrais Methode‘, August
- 2013 **Tanzkongress Deutschland**, Düsseldorf *Dance and Aging, Tanz in der Lebensspanne*  
Panel and Poster: ‘The *ArtRose* Ensemble’ June

#### Attendance at Conferences and Symposiums, partial list

- 2019 **7th International Conference on Dance and Somatics**, Coventry, UK, July
- 2019 **TanzKongress Deutschland**, Dresden, June
- 2017 **Dance Fields Conference**, Roehampton University, April

- 2017 Bath Spa University, **Somatics Conference**, September  
2016 GTF Salzburg, **Sound-Traces-Moves: Klangspuren in Bewegung**,  
November  
2015 GTF Hamburg, **‘Practice As Research’**, November



## **Appendix 5.**

### **Thesis relevant full publication**

#### **Appendix 5.1**

#### **The Feldenkrais Method in Practicing Dance: A Somatic Orientation**

**Coogan (ed.) 2016**

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## **2. THE FELDENKRAIS METHOD**

*Jenny Coogan*

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## Appendix 6.

### Surveys and Interviews 2014-2020

(Text marked in bold can be found in Chapter 7.)

#### Appendix 6.1

##### Interview questions and responses 2014

1. How do you feel about taking on more individual responsibility in the way you work - creatively and administratively - in the *ArtRose* group?

Both do not present me with any problems, although I find it easier to take on administrative responsibility than creative responsibility.

I like taking responsibility in the group but more creative than administrative.

We could talk about what particular tasks need to be performed and I am sure there is a way for me to take individual responsibility.

**Taking responsibility first for myself and then for the group and our work together, I could also say taking responsibility internally and externally simply suits me. This means for me to stand by my feelings, to deal with conflicts (e.g. black trousers for everyone) or in creative work: to say that the ending didn't feel round, or to work seriously on my solo. In terms of organization, it means for me above all to take on a bit more work, but also to see and appreciate the work the other members are doing in other areas.**

2. In which other physical practices are you active besides dancing?

I swim and ride my bike a lot and for long distances, I hike and go to the gym, but there I mostly go to courses (spine, etc.)

Not continuously: Feldenkrais, general sports like cycling, hiking, swimming

Twice a week I go to the gym and take part in various courses (Zumba, Pilates etc.) or do weight training. On Thursdays I go forest running.

Yoga, Cantienica

3. How does the implementation of the Feldenkrais Method® affect our work at ArtRose (for those of you who go to Gudrun's Feldenkrais classes)? Does it influence your own creative process? Does it have an effect on your physical condition? Does it have an effect on how you approach dance?

Getting to know the Feldenkrais method and attending Gudrun's classes have taught me to take care of my body, to perform certain movements that help me to alleviate my complaints. Before I paid little attention to the signals of my body, now I accept them and try to respond to them. It has an effect on dance in the sense that if you move without complaints, you can do everything much more intensively.

The Feldenkrais work with Gudrun has an influence on my posture (noticeable improvement) and on a more conscious perception of what happens during the various movements when I dance.

4. Does our work together influence how you understand, embody and appreciate dance?

Through our work together I have a different appreciation of contemporary dance and I try to dance or express feelings in this style.

I have always appreciated dance, maybe not always understood it. The latter has become easier for me since our work together, including improvisation.

Our work together, i.e. all the forms of expression we have learned and practiced, gives me the means to embody 'my' dance. Through my own experience that dance is an enormously creative process and requires great physical and mental performance, I appreciate dance even more than before. I most probably already had an understanding of dance even before our work together.

I love to see ballet performances and especially like to draw connections between the forms of expression in classical dance and different styles or forms of modern or contemporary dance.

I have always had respect for dance and for dancers. Ideally, they manage to portray their inner self to the outside and to embody it in an unusual way, by knowing and using their body in a much more differentiated way than other people know to do in order to express something - and always also themselves. The human body as a mediator between inside and outside has fascinated me for a long time (this has ultimately led to my work as a body therapist).

While dancing I experience anew (which I already know from my work) how much courage it takes to actually and truly express oneself and if it succeeds (as in the very first rehearsal of the solos) how much it affects me, touches me and feels healing. Meanwhile I belong to the big dance community in my self-image. That's why I was so annoyed that we didn't dance at the dance exhibition in the Hygiene Museum. Not because we had one performance less, but because we belonged there. Our dancing also plays a role in communication with my friends and in the family, where I am also perceived as a dancer.

5. Does our work together influence how you appreciate or observe dance performances that you attend?

Yes, definitely, I have become more critical, but also full of admiration for the performances.

I go to dance performances more critically than before, maybe also a little more often. I am especially curious to know whether a piece captures me or whether it bores me and why that is so. I observe with different eyes than before and see if I can learn something for my own process.

I always feel addressed when something dance-related happens in the city and I regret that I rarely have time and leisure for it. In fact, I have always experienced dance (most recently at the *Schaubuden-Sommer* CATALINE CARRASCO and Cie. ZERE EN CONDUCTA, both from Spain) as a very personal stimulus for my own dancing, to express myself. I think I have more sympathy than before, for the sweat as well as the emotions and more admiration for the ideas and skills I see.

6. What helps you to internalize and remember dance material?



The music, the rhythm or a structure often practiced helps me to remember the dance material, but especially the music. Music helps me a lot.

1. structuring, 2. repetitions

The movement improvisation depends very much on the music and my current mental condition. An improvisation in a dance performance I would endow with a roughly outlined structure, but always leave room for change.

**Actually, I know that the head is only moderately helpful, both in remembering and especially in internalizing. Nevertheless, my anxious part tries to calm down again and again with external aids.**

**It only works really well if I trust my body and its abilities confidently. If I allow myself to make mistakes, they are least likely. If I want to be perfect or at least good, I usually make mistakes and I have no connection to the inside anymore. Really good things usually only happen when I let myself dance without wanting to 'perform' anything.**

7. How do you control between movement improvisation and the acquisition of fixed patterns? Where do you find challenges, frustration and inspiration?

Challenges are a daily occurrence, they can be an argument an unpleasant experience, frustration or inspiration by a nice bike ride, meeting a loved one the joy of family, especially my grandchildren, the anticipation of a nice holiday trip.

Both things have become interesting for me. In the beginning I could not warm up to fixed patterns, I mainly wanted free improvisation. However, I now believe that fixed patterns can also be exciting. It is interesting for me that fixed patterns are even fun after they have been appropriated!

Challenges: Overcoming the challenge of learning fixed patterns so that you can enjoy them. Frustration: when over a long period of time no image of a foreseeable choreography is formed.

Inspiration: all the wonderful movement forms of Jenny, e.g. during the warming up; movements of other group members, if they are not formally performed; the common experience of a choreography in the group; amazement, what can be created in the group with 60+; thoughts about the social recognition of the 60+ generation; observations, which enrichment the young assistant Anna experienced by working with us

Fixed patterns often stress and frustrate me at the beginning because I make a lot of mistakes (see above). But when pattern becomes a part of the body and I dare, it is simply wonderful to walk with the group, to communicate with the others through the space, to feel the shared joy and power.

The solos are challenging as well. From the inside perspective - what do I want to express and from the outside perspective - what can I express? And then there is the question, how do I let my body speak? Most of the time I don't give myself enough time to really let something come into being, and I still believe that my "repertoire" is very limited, which is of course a very external way of looking at things and does not do justice to dance as a process (time/development/allowing myself to dance). I know that I sabotage myself with this train of thought, but it is not so easy to stop.

I find improvisations very supportive because they give me the space to develop

something little by little, to let something emerge without right or wrong. That's where I actually have the most joy and that's my main motivation to dance.

8. How do you cope with big changes and experiments that take place before you have defined the scenes?

I'm open to changes and experiments, but no longer once the choreography is nearing completion and there is not much time before the public performance. That makes me nervous and insecure.

First there is curiosity for the unknown, but then I am sometimes frustrated when I don't succeed, sometimes I might also have too high expectations of myself and I become impatient.

This is no problem for me, if there is enough time for the group to train these changes before a performance.

Before a performance the concentration during rehearsals is much higher and tensions increase.

On the one hand it's good because I like to try things out myself. On the other hand, not so good, because I often don't know whether "it" is already a valid variation or just an idea. Then sometimes the fear of remembering the "wrong" thing takes over.

Basically, of course, I know that the development of a dance is a process of trial and error.

9. What changes in your approach to our dancing and dance work together when you know that a performance is nearing?

The motivation is definitely greater.

Nothing essential; I was a little worried that short-term changes before a performance would not be captured and remembered by all members. That's why I decided to write down the sequences for everyone.

It gives me pleasure to stand in front of the audience, although the excitement or stage fright is always present beforehand. I am especially happy when I feel that what is presented is well received by the audience.

During the time when we were not preparing a performance, dancing felt more arbitrary, not so sparkling and challenging.

With a performance ahead dancing becomes more important, especially noticeable when the amount of rehearsals increases. Then I schedule my work and family life around dancing, which in turn I don't want to have as a daily routine.

I have also observed that I feel my body (even in everyday life) more during this intense time.

I simply feel more challenged to take myself, the dancing, the others seriously, to look more at what works, to give more overall – time, intensity, reliability, emotions.

The individual people in the group become more important, also more trusting.

10. How do you feel when YOU are in front of an audience?

Incredibly motivated and very happy.

By now quite good and without much stage fright.

Good. I know what I can and cannot do and what the group can do, and I do my best. It spurs me on that people have come for us and some for me. If they are interested, I would like to show my full potential. This desire to do so also awakens powers and possibilities that are usually not there in the rehearsal and I sometimes curious myself what develops and emerges.

## Appendix 6.2

### Interview 2016

**In preparation for the performance of *In each Other's Tracks* for the Dance Medicine Congress May 6-8, 2016, moderated by Annika Schröter, press representative for the Congress**

J: ...Annika you worked with group in the production in Hellerau as part of 'Linie 08'. I wanted the project to be based on the way work is done in Feldenkrais Method, so that it leads to a structured improvisation where everyone has their own moment. Everyone can do what they want to do. Gudrun wanted to play the violin, Tanja wanted to sing, Werner you wanted to do partnering with Karen...

- LAUGHTER -

J: Yes, you had your dance lesson, Gabi. Werner...you also had your very emotional moment...

Men always lift the ladies in the dance, right...?

It works the other way around too! - Oh, that's would be hard for me.

J: ...and that's why the piece was called *Small Moments of Greatness*. And then that was done, and I thought that this was the end; only this one production. But suddenly everybody said: "Well, we were very skeptical about you in the beginning: Days before the performance we still didn't have a set score!" But we improvise and then the scenes emerge from that and that's kind of fun, we stick to it!

So that is already...

...five or six years ago...

In 2011 we started.

J: But now Karen is new, Waltraud is new, the other Karen left, Barbara was there, she left the group too.

We have renewed ourselves in the meantime!

- LAUGHTERS -

J: Yes, but on the other hand, the work in and with our group has really entered in the dance pedagogy course. Anne was the rehearsal assistant and has written about it, Julia wanted to have it as part of her internship for next year, and in the last years there have always been assistants. Yes, and for this year's piece we thought we'd develop it as a cross-generational project - and that's great! In February, Anna performed too ... was there, too, and now both Anna and Julia are here.

There have actually already been five assistants, right?

J: Exactly, that's Julia from dance pedagogy. That means that we are not only tolerated or given a space, but that it has become an important thing or a possible important component of the ...

From time to time there have been students who just came and took a look.

J:..or participated...

... and took part.

J: Last year the first year BA students BAT1 also said: "Oh, can we dance with you?", and then they were there with motivation and verve. And I notice that the young dancers contribute a lot. Already in the first year I tried to build in more interaction

with the audience - not just once or in a single performance. And then last year some performances were really conceived in such a way that they were created together with the audience right from the start. In the second year, I think we had a little over a hundred people who took part and danced along. And in the church first - the church rocked! Everyone took part, no one was sitting any more, no one held their seats! Actually, the event was supposed to take place outside on the beach, but then it rained, and everyone went into the church, so that was really great! And it was unbelievable what it did to the young dancers and how they responded. They said to me: "You know, every day I am always in the dance hall and here you experience dance much more as a movement and as a meeting with other people, as an encounter in the community! They took that very much with them.

And so the development for you as dancers from five years ago until now: With regard to your body, do you somehow have the feeling that aches and pains have come or gone? Do you notice that you somehow move more consciously or unconsciously?

Yes, aches and pains have come and gone.

- LAUGHTER -

And how is that from the physical consciousness, where something pinches, have you noticed any change or development?

Everything pinches me, but when I dance, nothing pinches me anymore. That is really the case! I sometimes think when I go or drive here: 'You can't dance today, everything hurts you! And then Jenny comes, and she tells me ... like let me move from my breath... and then it works!

- LAUGHTER -

Then you want to lift women again.

It's incredible...

J: What I notice and notice very strongly is not or not so much whether something has changed in terms of pain or mobility but rather the development of your creative handling in the movement with yourself. That has developed enormously: You are now incredibly present within yourselves, but also together with the others. At the same time you draw from a much, much larger repertoire, even if it is only small things. I never feel them to be imposed or laboriously imposed, but really felt, really clear, really full of ideas... and what you now let develop with each other, this weight giving and receiving, and others are on the floor and we play with each other, it's great to see how you implement this on your own and what comes out of it!

In the beginning it was like this, when you said: "desert flower" or something like that, then I was thinking in my head what I could do about it...

Yes, exactly!

Since that time let myself go and discover what...

... is actually possible, yes, exactly ...

... what is going on, what is developing? Before, I'm so afraid that I can't do that...

... or do it wrong ...

... or do it wrong, exactly, that I could not even allow anything. So I always thought that I couldn't do it at all.

**Well then, we can go into it more deeply: the correspondence between dancing and Feldenkrais encourages people who are here to discover their own potential and to**

deal with what they are good at, what they can do easily, and from there to expand their skills. So, I am convinced that this is a very brilliant combination, also for me as a Feldenkrais teacher, because I now see completely different and new perspectives and possibilities through my own dancing. I would not have found this correspondence otherwise. And of course, it makes you healthier when you dance...so dancing simply makes you healthy...

... and happy!

... when I improvise...when I am allowed to improvise, then I find the movements that are good for me, I don't have to press myself into some template - like with others - and nothing is pressed or imposed on me.

I believe that it is also important from an emotional point of view, so we express our emotions, we have now experienced here the possibilities of how this could work, and I believe that we do and use this quite actively. And afterwards you are simply freer, so you feel more comfortable, your head is freer, and we feel better.

So, it is not only on a physical but also on an emotional level simply liberating and beneficial...

*- general agreement -*

J: Yes, it brings about a holistic improvement in the general well-being and feeling with yourself and your own body.

... but I also have the feeling that it is very beneficial for team building. You can feel that everything takes place together and hand in hand.

**Yes, it really is a wonderful group!**

J: The pieces were created that way, they don't come from my direction according to the motto: Here is the idea, and here we have this scene and here the other one! No, they come from a process that is accompanied and shaped by all of us. Everyone acts as a creator, and everyone has a say. Well, in the end I make the final decision, but it is basically a relatively democratic process.

Yes, of course, we simply have a say in it.

J: Yes, but you also give the material. The scenes and the ideas come from what we do and develop together. Well, the topic of the last project on February 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> was given, we couldn't design that freely.

... yes, because of the character of the piece.

J: But about last summer's dance you also said: "Now we closed our eyes and were very, not necessarily introverted, but calm, quiet and thoughtful, let's now pursue a more funny, amusing theme!"

**Yes, but one must also say that many of us had to process some things at the very beginning, that was the first theme ever. Well, we were all born shortly before the end of the war or shortly after it, and just...an incredible number of things came to light. So, when I think of Karen, who told me about her escape, they were out and about in the dirt! Or Wilhelma ... being born on February 13<sup>th</sup> [the day of the firebombing of the city of Dresden]. All of a sudden, things burst open, so I got goose bumps. Some of them only burst open two years later, when we started on the subject again. So, I think that was also a kind of cleansing. Whether you are aware of it, that is not meant in a psychotherapeutic context, but it happens.**

**J: Yes, but here we're in an artistic context, we're looking at it in an artistic context and everybody really brings their own experiences, thoughts and maybe fears into it and they develop an individual form of expression to express in their own way and according to their own possibilities what they've experienced in movement. And the memory is also trained, we have to remember something in the end.**

**- LAUGHTER -**

... even if it's hard.

**But maybe we could ask our young dancer how she feels about us and with us. Good! I can't complain. This is basically my second year here, because I was in Sweden last year. At the beginning, when I didn't know you yet, I came into the room for the first time and said to myself: "Oh yes, now I am curious...! Well, I didn't really have a real picture or any real prefabricated expectations, because I didn't know which picture I should make. I had absolutely no idea what I was getting into. And then it was like this... "I have to say, I really love you!"**

**- LAUGHTER -**

It's so nice and a great time with you guys and I should be crying by now!

Do you need a handkerchief?

Every single rehearsal with you is incredibly important to me, even if I don't say that all the time! Exactly because of something like that, because I'm always built so close to the water, that's why...

**- LAUGHTER -**

**But it's so great to see how much you give of yourself. So how much you open yourselves and how this exchange comes about. As a student/pupil you are used to that, if the teacher says something, I do it. And you, if you just don't feel like it, you sit on the chair.**

**- LAUGHTER -**

**Then you just don't feel like it anymore. You are just so real, and you bring so much of yourself with you. And every time you dance the *island*, for example, I always have to be careful not to start crying because it's so moving. I think it's so great how you open up, how you can open up and how much of yourself you reveal, because it's so rare in this fast-moving society these days. A society in which things always have to go fast-fast, where you're always going zig-zag-zag-zag - I have to finish this project, that's what I have to do, and zag!, and I always have to be square-practical-good, and I always have to look good... . And I think that's just so great that you dare to do so much, and I take so much of you with me - every hour. There is so much wisdom floating around, even if you don't say anything, so you don't have to say much! Also, on stage you have such an amazing presence, because you bring such stories with you. That impresses me so much! And when I tell about you, I am just ... I think I tell a lot about you.**

**- LAUGHTER -**

... and I always grin when I do. I don't know how to describe it with words. That is very emotional and very important for me. And when I think about the fact that I'm leaving soon - and I often think about it - and now it's getting dramatic - then I always think: "Oh God, what am I going to do without them?"

**- LAUGHTER -**

I think this is also interesting for you as a student of dance education. Because you are only taught the basics for work with children, young people and adults, but nothing beyond that.

Exactly: youth, achievement, output ...

No, but also as target groups: Children, youth and then you have adult education, but that goes beyond that, you can't compare that with the work with a thirty- or forty-year-old.

Yes, I agree that this is completely missing from the degree programme. I've only noticed it now because I'm here...

...because this offer exists.

Exactly! Because I was asked: "Can you join in? Is anyone dance pedagogy student interested?". And that's what's missing from the course! So that's something you can also think about for a master's degree in the community area, if you don't want to include that. Because especially when it comes to the master's, that's where I want to specialize and we don't get any input from the study programme, only through this group do I now have the input.

And it's important that there's actually a target group here and that there's interest!

J: Yes, I spent two weeks in Ludwigsburg on a small exchange with people who work with older people in artistic dance to see what kind of structures exist in Germany: There is a lot of really good support in different cultural institutions. Bremen was represented, Hamburg, Ludwigsburg, the Stuttgart area, Munich, Zurich too, and then there are many others who were not at this conference or meeting. And it is interesting to see that this does not exist in Dresden. As far as I know, we are the only ones here in the former East.

We are lucky!

J: We should really see that we might get a little bit more support for our work and our productions!

**Actually, it's Jenny on a daily basis who provides us with her manpower, and each of us tries to bring in what we can ... one of us is good with bookkeeping, the others write the texts and we finance ourselves through small donations. We have a hard time paying for our music!**

But there's also the *Kulturstiftung* (cultural foundation) that supports such things.

J: Yes, but we haven't even dealt with that yet, and besides my daily work at the university, there's hardly any time for that. Or we could just find a manager...

- LAUGHTERS -

Unfortunately, you will have to queue for that.

- LAUGHTER -

No, but the *Kulturstiftung* supports something like that! So what does "something like that" mean? The *Kulturstiftung* funds projects - "generation" is a key word here anyway - and then it's definitely an option!

But is that what you meant?

No, that's not it, but of course I also know the *Kulturstiftung*, that's exactly what I mean, it's formerly *Loeffelholz*...

J: Okay, I have to go.

Thank you very much! I'll play this back to you through Jenny again



## Appendix 6.3

### 2018 semi-structured interviews transcribed by Kira Benkert. Translation by the author

#### 1. New people in the group

**I don't want to address any particular person now, but I have now put myself in others' positions over the past year and have dealt with myself intensively. If I say "it's open to everyone", yes, and then I say "it doesn't fit", who decides what fits and what doesn't fit? Basically, if you say that it is open to everyone, someone who says "I'll come on Mondays" and then suddenly you say "well you don't fit", then I am very much struggling with myself. In the end, a solution always emerged by itself, but the question "will the group dissolve?" was also there. And then, yes, then you can no longer say "it's open for everyone". Then you can actually say: "it is open for everyone who fits into a certain group in a certain way".**

One also has responsibility for the group, for the existence of the group, for the existence of society. That is why it is not possible to say, 'we let everyone in,' you have to be careful. I think you have to be like this and like that to fit into the group. It is not so simple.

I think it would be important to perhaps formulate a few basic rules ... or prerequisites. A philosophy, so to speak, that distinguishes this group and that we adhere to.

**I don't know, maybe I missed it, but I haven't read it anywhere yet. Oh, in the article, yes. No, what I meant was that maybe we should make it clearer...**

Maybe we just need to tell her that more clearly?

**Or just talk about it then, not saying "you are... you are disturbing", but rather "I have a problem with it when you are like this."**

**Exactly!**

**Or "that's what's difficult for us..." or "we wish..."**

**You have to bring it up.**

**It's important!**

#### 2. Workshops in Hellerau

These workshops in Hellerau are a great experience for our group and that others dance with us there and that we can always watch the subsequent performances ourselves. I think that this also gives us an inner expansion and I hope that we can continue to hold workshops in Hellerau. I think that is wonderful. For me it was really great, it doesn't always work out time-wise, but I also felt freer there, because I dancing wasn't quite as internalized at the beginning, not the way it is now, I must say. That's what I wish for, if that could be maintained in our group, that's not self-evident, of course, the workshops on Saturdays.

What did I want to say? Well, I find it exciting to always experience other dancers or to get to know other philosophies. Because that is immensely enriching. And that makes it exciting in a way, too, because we are not always in "our own juice". And the fact that other people come, and people you didn't know before, and have to get involved

with a stranger in such a situation in a completely new way, in the workshop I mean now, creates exactly that exciting, new situation. And I had quite a few aha-experiences in the workshops, where I thought "Oh, wow, that's how it works" or "That's how this feels as a movement" or something like that. That's a really great thing, I hope it stays that way.

So, I always regret very much if I can't come on Saturdays, but that happens often, unfortunately. It has also become increasingly interesting for me, I mean, we've been dancing with you for seven years now, but everyone approaches dance differently, and that expands my horizons again to find out: how does the other person approach it? And since we began, I have also gained experience in how I approach dance, and it is always exciting to expand your experience and knowledge about working with these people. And when you watch others' performances, it is actually the same.

2.1. Has something changed in relation to how you experience Monday dance practice, performance in the group, attending dance performance, appreciation of dance?

J: I am wondering if you notice changes in yourself in relation to how you experience the weekly practice in the group, at the Saturday workshops with other artists, and about how you look at dance when you are a spectator, or appreciate dance, not only yourself in dance, but dance in general. We see each other often at performances, in Hellerau and in other places. Might have something changed in the way you access dance or the types of dance performances you now attend?

I used to watch it like I watched a film, I liked one thing, I didn't like the other so much... I was always interested in watching that, watching dance always interested me. But I would never have gone so deep into it. In the meantime, I always look at it with my eyes and say **"Ahh, you could do it like this and he really does it from here, from the shoulder or what, that's exciting! So I'm much more involved on stage than before, I just sat in my armchair and watched it, it was sometimes nice and sometimes not nice, but that's how I'm really much more - as a dancer - you have to say again, I'm there when they dance now. But when the spark ignites, which doesn't always happen, it's like I'm much more touched. Kinaesthetic empathy, exactly!"**

2.2. With the experiences of the last year in *ArtRose* what has changed in your perception of dance, when you dance or when you witness dance?

Harald: Yes, since I started moving myself, I have internalized it in this form and have a completely different view. I know what it takes to move like that, or I can empathize better, maybe I also understand much better what dancing means. So, in the past it was something rather foreign, it is now the last art to which I have found access, and that is now opening up to me in a completely new way. On the one hand, by moving myself, and on the other hand I notice that it appeals to me much more than theatre, for example. So, I go to Hellerau much more than I go to the theatre. Theatre has become a bit boring for me because of that.

3. Feldenkrais in Practice

J: Do you notice that a certain approach is driving our practice, which has to do with Feldenkrais?

Wilhelma: When I joined the group in 2011, I knew nothing about Feldenkrais. I was interested in Feldenkrais with dance and that's why I took part in a weekly Feldenkrais ATM class with a member of *ArtRose* who, like Jenny, is also a Feldenkrais Practitioner. I must say that what we do in dancing and in the Feldenkrais Lessons has helped me a lot. The lumbar spine pain that I permanently felt is as good as gone. This is really a sign for me of how important these movements, the small, and especially soft movements, are, because I have probably always moved too rigidly. And now everything about Feldenkrais dance is actually, pleasant, painless, and aesthetically satisfying.

So, as I understand Feldenkrais, there is a great freedom to do a specific thing in different ways. So, to find out what is the appropriate way for me - at the moment - to do something, to stand up, to sit down, to roll myself or do whatever else. So, to do something specific in different ways and none of the ways is "the" right one, there are only the ones that are appropriate for me at this moment in time. And that's basically what we do in improvisation, or when we approach themes, we do it exactly the same way, so we try out what is the appropriate way for me to approach this task, this theme. So, there are simply different ways, full stop. None is right and none is wrong. I also find it somehow mentally good to accept that there are different ways of doing things and there is no right and no wrong, there is only my way and for the other person something else might be appropriate.

So, I separated that somehow, I don't know why, I couldn't explain it, but I just separated dance and Feldenkrais.

Especially in the warming up of Jenny, there I already recognize all the elements of Feldenkrais. And now that I regularly attend Feldenkrais Group Lessons with Gudrun, it comes back, and I just love it.

#### 4. Making of a Dance

**Yes, what increasingly interests me is: how are choreographies created? Well, it's almost like a crime thriller for me. And what I also understood after the seven years: it's not possible to set up a fixed plan from the start and then fill it in and work through it somehow, that's certainly not going to be a good choreography. And this, this mixture, that you might have a framework that can be rebuilt again and again and then really be filled, the frame, and maybe rebuilt again, I find that really exciting. Of course I don't see how it the piece came about in normal performances that I watch, but I'm really happy to see how it came about here, and maybe it will be a little bit different than in the past, because we're starting much, much earlier now, and I'm very curious.**

**And what you said, Jenny, yes, I think it's good to just talk things through. And point them out and then you can see how the other person reacts. And whether they want to and can get involved in the group. I think this is a prerequisite for being honest with each other, otherwise we can't get involved in the group.**

## Appendix 6.4

### Interview 2018: "How do you deal with problems in the group?" with Harald, Eckart, Anita

**J:** In the past I used to feel that there was a lot of disagreement between individuals. But what you said that Werner always expressed himself very strongly and positioned himself very vehemently, yes, that's true. And if someone couldn't bear it, as was the case with Gudrun, she would bring it up, but it was said immediately. There was no talking around the bush, and now nobody really says what's is going on. Because then sooner or later it leads to an unresolved situation that really escalates. You could see how it went back then. Certain things were not said, I don't know whether it has to do with shyness or not. Maybe it has more to do with a familiarity in the group that you can say everything, and maybe that's it. It's not that we have to accept everything that the newcomers bring to the table, that's clear, but there are ways of integrating them, and I've experienced in the group that it develops.

Yes, I don't know that from you from before.

- LAUGHTER -

But the impression I got was that there is a great need for harmony.

Who doesn't have this longing?

- LAUGHTER -

Because it disturbs our harmony.

**No, I really don't get it. So that's what I can say about it. And what you said, Jenny, yes, I think it's good to just bring things up. And point them out and then you can see how the other person reacts. And whether they want to and can get involved in the group. I think that is a prerequisite for being honest with each other, otherwise we can't get involved in the group.**

Sometimes it's so atmospheric that you can hardly say anything about it.

- CLUTTER OF VOICES -

It is about the note that you strike ...

- LAUGHTER -

For example, I received an email, that hurt me a lot, really, but I'm sure that it has something to do with, as you say, practicing tolerance, that's for sure. It was about these difficult appointments. And you're not prepared to constantly look for a program to open it, or to open it again and again at all, and so that hurt me somehow. No, that's a disrespect for someone else, I'm sure that's not what I meant, you're absolutely right, being upset is actually pointless, you know.

I didn't say it was pointless. But I don't understand it.

Yes, yes, you're right. But it's right that you should say that.

There's the question of how often you always express it. I don't think we're changing anything about it.

Yes, I think so too, and we're not really used to dealing with each other in this way, at least not in my opinion. I don't know how you see it.

Well, on the one hand... there are things like that, so sometimes I think: 'aha, why is she doing that now', but then I smile about it, think: 'aha, that's how it is'. But what I

also notice with her is - and because I know this from my own experience, when you are so funny or very different from other people, I can speak from experience - that you somehow try to be part of the group. And that sometimes is reflected in an unusual, for others sometimes a bit weird way. But I notice that she still wants to be part of it. It's about Ila?

**And I think everyone deserves a chance in some way. I can see that with me, I also dependent on you taking me the way I am. Even with my quirks and limits and limitations and everything I have. And I think that's the same for all of us.**

Absolutely!

And..., yes, I don't have a solution for that either, but I just think it's a pity if it is so polarizing.

I understand that. But it's more of a gut feeling now. But in this case, you really have to use your head. That's pretty difficult for me too. I read the email from Gabi and said to her: "Shall I tell her how it was? And then I explained it to her, and she said: "Well, I can live with that." And that is simply incomprehensible to me. **So, I would not have any contact with such a person in my free time. It's just a completely different world. She's quite a character, okay, but I wouldn't voluntarily say to myself: 'Okay, oh, I'm happy to meet you or I'll meet you'. And here I am forced, so to speak, to deal with it.**

I notice that it also breaks up the group a bit. So that's... on the one hand, whether I can accept it, on the other hand what it does to and in the group. So, it creates a particular atmosphere every time. You could now say that we are too sensitive or something. **You could also say: we are sensitive, that would put it in a different light.** Yes, that probably is the crux.

**And it takes sensitivity to be able to develop something together in the group. It means and needs trust when I lean on you and put all my weight on you. There has to be a trust and a common ground or something. For me, it's not possible without that. So, it is not so easy for me to get involved with other people. I am outwardly sociable, again and again, but to really get involved is not easy for me. It is hard for me.**

Many people feel that way.

Yes, probably.

## Appendix 6.5

### Interview questions and answers 2020

#### For newer members

1. You are relatively new to the group. Do you feel that there is a significant difference between the newer and older group members? Do you feel that you belong to the group?

Yes, in the ability to express myself through dance.

2. As a relatively new member of the group in September 2019, you entered a performance project. How did you deal with the challenge (rehearsals and performance)?

3. Do you distinguish the way of being together and dancing together in ArtRose from other experiences you have had with community dance? If so, what are the differences?

**In the ArtRose ensemble there is inner freedom for expression and for intuitive *Anleitung* (direction).**

**Before I came to ArtRose I only had experience with the usual dance classes. There we also had joy in dancing, but our own feelings did not find a way of being expressed or explained by the body.**

#### For older members

1. Have you discovered different strategies for learning, remembering and dealing with the tasks for editing and performing the piece, *Mut und Gnade*?

Without taking notes and in addition some drawings or sketches of the individual ideas, sequences and scenes, it would not have worked for me. I looked at these notes over and over again, let them run before my mind's eye and also practised them in physically. Only little by little I was able to put the notes away.

**With every exercise in the group it worked better, we inspired each other, of course we also corrected each other. Often, I had to ask because I just couldn't internalize some scenes, and everyone was happy to help me. Sometimes I was able to help others as well. This being there for each other makes the group so valuable for me.**

We constantly encounter courage and grace in life. The more I dealt with this topic, the more feelings I felt. I felt that the improvisations were much more successful if I only devoted myself to my feelings. As a head-controlled person, this is still not always easy for me, but I now know that I can learn to do this too.

**Yes, I have recognized the different strategies, rather in retrospect, and I feel that the training prepared by Jenny is varied and builds on each other.**

I find a video very helpful for reflection, 'aha this is the way that I move' and based on this I can continue my development...

In the video a pattern is also more understandable and evident for me and this makes it easier to imitate.

**A drawing is very helpful for me for spatial orientation.**

Writing down the new sequences helps me, otherwise I try to remember everything.

2. How did you feel about performing the dance *Mut und Gnade* a second time 10 months after the premiere?

**First there was pride. Because for me it meant that the dance piece was very good and we were very good. The second thing was also the ambition and the chance to perform my own scenes better, more expressively and with more ease. I had not always been able to fully engage with my thoughts and feelings and express them in dance.**

**I felt a little more secure and I found that the piece had gained in maturity through the changes. I felt much more connected to the piece.**

**I liked the changes very much, such as the playground scene and my turning with several women around me, the orderly exit of the couples. The transitions of the individual scenes were more coherent for me, so that I could memorize them well in the new sequencing order.**

I found a second performance very meaningful and I also enjoyed it, because we had a "base" to build on, which could be raised to a higher level by redesigning and rearranging. Many scenes and the sequence of the scenes could be significantly improved.

The only negative thing for me personally: the large number of repetitions of the final sequence went far beyond what I could bear. Not only did it cost me a lot of strength to endure it, but in the end, it also demotivated me to continue dancing the characters properly. But that is my personal feeling...for others the repetitions were perhaps right.

I endured the excessive practice of the step sequences from my point of view because of my sense of duty towards the group and because I also saw the then current state of the group. For me it would have been more enriching, helpful and interesting to continue working on individual scenes. I regret that I did not work on myself, especially for the first scene. But I can remember that especially the daily practice before the last performance used up my strength and desire to create my own scenes.

The performance in Berlin was very different from the one in Dresden; the space, the design possibilities, the light, the resonance - all this was more generous, more professional in the first performance; the middle part in Berlin was the clear highlight of both performances; the first performance impressed with a balanced overall performance; both performances were connected with a lot of tension; the group showed different sensitivities and insecurities; three different step combinations in the finale continued to cause irritation; through increased repetition several times a loss of concentration occurred; after the performance there was no collective relaxation.

In the short-term I was given an appointment on Thursday afternoon with the Berlin Mitte tax office on Friday morning; the appointment had previously been postponed several times; this appointment was extremely important because of my dispute with the tax office. It was about a hefty five-figure payment.

**The performance in Berlin was a better one for me than in the *Hochschule für Bildende Künste*. I knew my weaknesses from the video and was able to work on them. The new co-dancers also had a bigger part in this performance. From my point of view, they had completely different approaches and perspectives than I did. This gave me new impulses that worked well for me.**

3. How do you feel about taking on more individual responsibility in the way you work - creatively and administratively - in the group?

Shortly before I retired after a professional life full of duty and responsibility, I joined the *ArtRosen*. This made my departure from professional life much easier. As a member of this group you also have an obligation and responsibility, and this is lived by everyone. I would never consider not attending dance practice unless there is a good reason. The group gives me the feeling that I am welcome and needed.

**It fascinated me how we were all involved, sometimes completely unnoticed, in the development and structure of our piece.**

**When I have the feeling that something corresponds to my possibilities and abilities, I also like taking on responsibility in the group. (Organization of our 3 performances at the Elbhangfest, raising money for the association...).**

4. In which physical practices are you engaged besides dancing?

Cycling, nordic walking, folk dance

5. Does our work together influence how you understand, embody and appreciate dance?

**It took me a while to understand and internalize the way of dancing in our group.**

**Before joining *ArtRose*, dance for me was essentially rhythmic movement to the beat of the music (tap dance, Zumba). Almost exclusively muscles were used to dance and only the rhythm of the music determined my movements. Expressive dance was a completely new and wonderful experience for me.**

**Every dance session begins with a warm-up, in which I perceive every part of the body and its relation to space and earth. It feels light and relaxed. Somatic learning creates a completely new relationship to your own body and an inner harmony. The whole body moves softly and fluently.**

**People dancing with me give me impulses, the whole group then affects me as a whole.**

6. Does our work together influence how you appreciate and observe the dance events you attend?

**I can now feel the energy that flows through the dancers' bodies, admire the harmonious movements of their bodies and better recognize the feelings that are being expressed.**

My interest in dance in general has grown. I increasingly watch dance performances, watch dance films, read dance biographies and visit dance exhibitions and workshops. I perceive this as both an enrichment and an expansion of myself. With it I live a part of myself that I loved very much as a child, but then only integrated to a very limited extent in my adult life.

7. What helps you to internalize and remember dance material?

(See also under 1.) Constant repetition of individual scenes is most effective for me. Some sequences of movement I cannot internalize immediately. Often the only thing that helps is an individual and joint rehearsal with a group leader...

When internalizing and remembering dance material, it helps me first and foremost to practice alone, but also to paint on the material, to write down sequences and to go through them in my head. **But the most important thing for me is to keep coming back to it in the group, because of course the same process in the group is very different from doing it alone. I would like it to be simply practiced, constantly, as if it were done in passing - without evaluation, but of course with corrections.**



I would also like to repeat the patterns from time to time, especially in the times when there is no performance, so that they aren't completely forgotten and to keep the connection to the piece. Maybe also to integrate the new ones, but I'm not sure about that. At the moment I cannot imagine performing most of them.

8. How do you navigate between movement improvisation and the acquisition of fixed patterns? Where do you find challenges, frustration and inspiration?

**I find inspiration mainly in improvisation, where I can express my ideas and feelings without having to think. I then live in this world, which we want to express in the respective scene. Fixed patterns are challenge, as I have to learn them properly and execute them with a lot of concentration. Therefore, I am not always as relaxed as I would wish for. If mistakes happen despite intensive practice, I get frustrated.**

The training with Franzi and the dance teachers are quite good, but significantly less intensive than with you.

**I see an inner structure in your dance sessions. They begin with Feldenkrais and special exercises for certain themes, body areas or movement qualities and from this an improvisation usually develops - first of all for each person alone - which then leads to encounters and something together in which the beginning of the lesson is contained. Because the training has a structure which I also experience - not linearly, but above all - from the outside to the inside, at the end of the session I am addressed and involved in the dance as a whole person and often touched, not only on the physical-sporting level.**

**It is frustrating for me when I do not understand something immediately or cannot remember it. This is of course also a challenge and I try to switch from frustration to challenge as quickly as possible. This way I can handle it better.**

**I find many of the suggestions you give in the training sessions inspiring. To experience certain movement qualities, to focus on individual parts of the body, to translate a given theme into my movement language and to form it.**

But also sequences in which I am asked to show myself in the group. The best example was the "island" in *In each other's tracks*. If this process, also offers room for me to fully explore everything physically and emotionally, while, at the same time being embedded in the experience of the group, this is wonderful. The others feel the same. For me it's not so easy to answer, because I respond a lot out to the individual situations. **In improvisation it really depends on my own mood. Who is my dance partner at what moment, how does he/she react to me and what is the overall mood of the group? The acquisition of fixed patterns is guided by my body and mind. I have to feel very comfortable and have the feeling that I can express something in the performance.**

9. How do you cope with big changes and attempts/experiments that take place before individual scenes have been clearly defined?

**Usually I have no problems with this, because it also makes the whole development of the dance piece exciting. Especially when we dance individual scenes and then it is decided which one will be included in the play. But there is also the exception when, for example, when parts that I particularly liked or knew well were later changed again or omitted completely. Then there is a bit of frustration.**

**I love changes when they make sense, so that the whole thing works better. And I am open to try something unusual.**

**In the past, changes were too frequent and difficult to understand, but that is different now. Sometimes I would have liked to dance a similar sequence a 2nd and 3rd time before another change is made again. But when a whole week passes some things are forgotten...**

**That's why I'm very much in favour of having intensive rehearsals in the last weeks before the performance and also at the place of performance, if that is possible.**

**I really enjoyed the use of live music and recorded music (CD). I really love it when the music invites me to dance.**

**Trials and experiments are not really my thing. I always want to know beforehand - in many things in my life - where the journey is heading. Once I have grasped the "red thread" of the overall project in my mind, then I can get really get into it. I think for some things I simply lack imagination and can hardly detach myself from my own ideas.**

**10. What changes in your approach to our dancing and dancing together when you know that a performance is coming up?**

**The exercises, even at home, become more intensive. But also, the tension increases, so that some things never relax.**

**When a performance is coming up, my approach to dancing actually changes very little. Maybe that's because I already get completely involved in a normal training. So, I get more excited, maybe a bit more tense, react extremely sensitively to pressure, but none of that changes my approach.**

**What changes before performances is the importance of our dancing in my life? I then subordinate almost everything else to the preparations for the performance, especially when it comes to scheduling.**

**Performances are important milestones in our dance development. We can look at something concrete and say: we got a little lost there or that was great - we'll continue in that direction. It is also self-affirmation. We have achieved that! People applauded or were even enthusiastic. We could give something. The films, and for me even more so the beautiful photos of Henning, accompany and prove this impressively.**

**Once or twice a year I find such a break very important, helpful and beautiful. More frequent performances would take up too much time for me. Now I can finally travel and see the world, which was hardly possible in the past and only to a limited extent in the last 30 years.**

**When a performance is coming up, I try to understand my dancing like a normal rehearsal, i.e. that I try to stay calm and relaxed inside, because when stressful situations arise, I feel a tension that paralyses me, which is not good for me, limits and prevents my creativity and desire to dance.**

**A performance in front of an audience is good and important and I like it, e.g. the fall scene in *Mut und Gnade* or something "crazy", whereby the "crazy" has limits due to physical limitations alone. Constant repetition of scenes is uncomfortable for me and the more I try, the less I succeed because I lose the desire.**

My concentration is increased, and I try to remember better. It is difficult for me how to express this in a written format. Maybe an example from others would help me. The necessity was not clear to me at the beginning.

**Performances give me the desire and incentive to continue expressing myself artistically. It inspires my life without many words.**

**On stage I feel the joy very strongly, to experience and show myself as a dancing person, moving, telling and giving something to the audience together with the group - especially this joy of dancing and living.**

**The completely carefree nature of the first performances has somewhat evaporated in me, I think it is due to the fact that the group has generally become more professional.**

I am no longer so relaxed at the thought that our work together will ultimately end in a performance. Something compulsive creeps into my subconscious, which I cannot let go of despite my best efforts - it is and remains the head. This is confirmed again and again in the recorded videos of our performances.

11. How do you feel when you are in front of an audience?

I have stage fright but at the same time I am very proud to be part of this group and this particular performance.

I like going on stage, even though I am always very excited. It challenges me. Very often I hide in the everyday, safe. On stage I have to overcome this inert, insecure part of myself.

In any case, being excited to present everything I have practiced so perfectly and convincingly is a challenge that I am also happy to meet when the stress drops, and I become inwardly calm and devote myself completely to dancing. Then I feel happiness and grace.

And of course, the setting is also something, in Dresden it was a stage that made a big impression with the lighting and the stage design and the conception of the entire evening programme. It was also the first time for me to perform in front of dance experts and dance enthusiasts. In Berlin, with its small audience and the stage, which was more like a rehearsal room, my motivation was not as high as in Dresden to show my very best. However, it is exciting and joyful when the audience expresses joy, amazement and thanks the performance with applause.

Standing in front of the audience does not bother me. But the compulsion to do everything "well" often gets in my way and goes in the wrong direction.

12. What motivates you to stay in the group?

**I still like to go to the ArtRose training and there are several reasons for that. I can go there:**

**test and expand my physical possibilities**

let my movements develop out from my body (not out of my head as is usually the case in my everyday life) and thus experience myself on a different, more truthful level in this physical way, to get in contact with people, to get close to them and to build and feel trust, with as little control as possible from the mind, from learned opinions and ideas

**experience the beauty of authentic, harmonious movement**

to act out powerfully, which I do not enjoy in physical exercises. **In dance training, it is**

even the case that I can't hold back at all (e.g. in case of small injuries or a cold). It simply takes hold of me and I have to let myself in and express myself properly. For me, our weekly dancing has become an integral part of my life, which has had an increasingly positive effect on my physical and mental flexibility over the years.

13. ArtRose has been in existence for nine years. As a founding member, what changes or transformations or developments are significant for you?

I can't differentiate exactly what dancing has changed in my over these 9 years, because I started working with the core of my being (also very physically) at the same time and also practice Yoga regularly.

**Certainly it has brought me a lot of joy, flexibility, extended movement fantasy and also courage to do so, more understanding of the dancing, friendly connections to some of my fellow dancers and now and then before performances also some unpleasant stress.**

When Jenny asked us 11 years ago to do a project under her direction, I neither knew Laban, nor had I heard of Feldenkrais. I was curious, wanted to move and maybe in a completely different way than I had done before. This has now become 11 years of dancing together, with all the ups and downs, joy, fun, resignation, sadness, the desire to give up - everything was there.

**I have learned a lot during these years, the attention and care for my body, many things I never dealt with before. It was enriching for me. I was also fascinated by the coming together of our group, which was made up of the most diverse biographies without any judgement of the individual in a way that I consider a gift. With the opening of the group changes have occurred, from my point of view there is still a certain distance between "old" and "new" group. I myself find it more difficult to get involved with a new member of the group during our partner improvisations. From my point of view, for the whole group some, not all, new members are an exciting enrichment.**

**Over the nine years I have always experienced something new. Especially the warming up is the basis for the development and enrichment of the own repertoire of movement forms. Also, the improvisations have never been and never will be boring or in a repetitive loop for me. They are always varied, inspiring and sometimes challenging.**

**Especially in the first years of ArtRose my agility, my joy of life, my artistic-dancing creativity, my confidence in performing in front of an audience got a boost. Within the group itself I felt a climate of familiarity with each other and a feeling of togetherness. Especially around Werner this developed as a crystallization point. Over the years I noticed that especially in improvisations my counterparts have a great influence on which movement forms are awakened in me from the learned and intuitive ones. I remember Thomas, who addressed the richest and most diverse patterns in me, and our encounters as an outstanding experience. But also, the experience of working with Gaby in a more meditative way is very interesting. Of course, there are a lot of interesting nuances between these two extremes that I feel when dancing with many others.**

There are also partners with whom it takes a lot of effort to motivate myself to move

at all. My ability to persevere and tolerate this has decreased in recent years. Maybe I don't want to get so close to complete strangers anymore, I don't know why? I suspect that the character of the group is developing from a sworn in and familiar community to a real community dance group. This probably means more and changing persons. Jenny has already foreseen this development, as it has happened earlier in other countries. I also felt the lively interest in 60+ dance very clearly in Hellerau recently. For Jenny a really big success! For me personally, I cannot yet answer the question of whether I can find pleasure in this broader approach with more and changing actors in the future. I will try it when I am healthy again!

14. What do you think about our way of creating our choreographies all together?

**I like the growth method with which our pieces are created. I can deal well with experiments if I recognize them as such or if they are named that way. It becomes difficult for me when I have to change a movement sequence that I had already understood as a decision, again and maybe even a second or third time.**

It is very difficult for me to change an internalized sequence. This makes me feel insecure. For me, a sequence is either still in the stage of development, in which case I do not yet have to be able to repeat it properly, or I internalize it and can repeat it - but not constantly change it. Then the repetitions also become faulty, because my body-consciousness does not know which variant it should now fall back on. So, I am simply not flexible enough.

On top of that comes my acquired pressure to perform: "I have to do everything well and correctly," that I know resonates with your feelings sometimes. That's why your pressure is especially important to me, because then my own pressure will immediately kick in. I can hardly bear that. I have already done enough in my life and I am no longer looking for maximum performance, but I can't get this inner mechanism to switch off.

Don't get me wrong. **Of course, it takes seriousness and commitment when we prepare a performance. Anyone who goes on a stage has a responsibility.**

But for me - and this is what I hear from Gabi, Wilhelma, Renate, Irene, and Karin - the joy, not the performance, should remain in the foreground. The latter should remain on the important second place.

**When designing a scene, I sometimes need a little push and a hint how it might look like. It is then easier for me to develop it further in my own way.**